

An aerial photograph of the Adirondack Mountains, showing a vast expanse of forested peaks and valleys. The mountains are covered in dense green and brown forest, with some rocky outcrops visible. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is a majestic and scenic view of the Adirondack Park region.

# The Adirondack Park and Rural America

Economic and Population Trends 1970–2010

**PROTECT**   
**THE ADIRONDACKS!**







# The Adirondack Park and Rural America

## Economic and Population Trends 1970–2010

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# The Adirondack Park and Rural America

## Economic and Population Trends 1970–2010

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## Adirondack Park

The Adirondack Park is an unusual park. Millions of acres of constitutionally protected Forest Preserve surround and are surrounded by further millions of acres of privately owned land. It is home to loons, moose, and bears, and it is also home to 130,000 New Yorkers living in towns and villages throughout the Park. Adirondack residents live in and enjoy one of the world's great experiments of people and wilderness existing side by side.

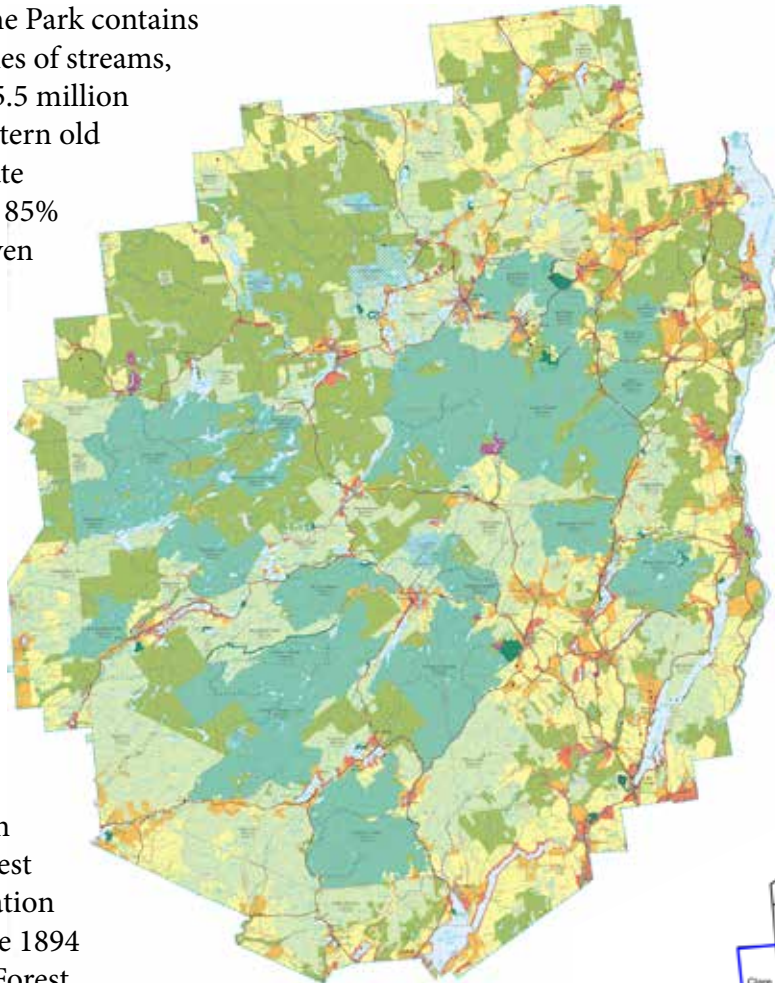
Known for its mountains, water, and forests, the Adirondack Park has 46 peaks over 4,000 feet, eleven with rare alpine vegetation, and over 1,500 peaks topping 1,000 feet. The Park contains over 3,000 lakes and ponds, 35,000 miles of streams, and 1 million acres of wetlands. In its 5.5 million acres of forests are 500,000 acres of eastern old growth. Protected by the New York State constitution, the Forest Preserve holds 85% of the total wilderness lands in the eleven northeast states.

Private land development in the Park is jointly managed by the New York State Adirondack Park Agency and local governments. The Adirondack Park offers the most accessible wild area in the U.S., within a half-day's drive of over 80 million people. More than 12 million seasonal visitors come to the Adirondack Park every year. It is a park of people and nature.

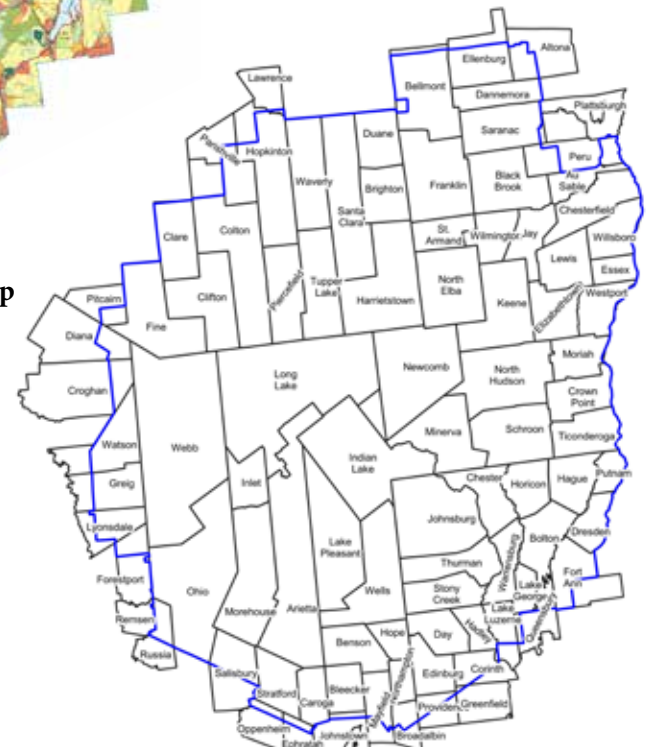
Protection of the Adirondacks began in 1885 with the establishment of the Forest Preserve. This was followed by the creation of the Adirondack Park in 1892 and the 1894 state constitutional provision that the Forest Preserve "shall be forever kept as wild forest lands." What is important about this decade of conservation is that all these steps showed how New York understood that what happens in the Adirondacks is a matter of state-wide significance. Protecting the fountains of New York's rivers and guarding forever a recreational retreat for everyone, the Adirondack Park exists because all New Yorkers understood then and understand today that Adirondack forests and waters are vital to the state.

While the public-private character of the Adirondack Park provides unique opportunities for open-space protection, it also complicates the relationship between conservation and economic opportunity. This tension creates the context for this report.

**Adirondack Park in New York State**



**Adirondack Park Agency  
Land Use and Development Plan Map**



**92 Towns in Adirondack Park**

## Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to examine the belief, long held by many across the Adirondacks and in state government, that environmental protections have negatively impacted Adirondack communities. This argument holds that regulation of private land use and extensive land protection through purchases for the Forest Preserve or by conservation easement have hampered economic development. This, the argument goes, has forced people to leave the Adirondack Park in search of employment and a better life. Have these management efforts helped or harmed the Park's communities? To explore this question, this report presents analyses and comparisons of the economic and population experiences of the Adirondack Park with those of other rural areas.

Long-term economic and population trends of Adirondack communities, starting in 1970 and ending in 2010, were compared in this report. This period coincides with the establishment of regional land-use zoning and a period of sustained land protection. This report analyzes standard economic indicators, including median household income, per capita income, the poverty rate, and the rates of employment and self-employment. It looks at standard population indicators, including population growth, median age, and the ratio of children to adults of childbearing age. The report also examines age groups to compare the experiences of young adults of college age, career age adults, and retirees.

In all cases, we compare the experiences of Adirondack communities with those of New York State, the U.S., and Rural America. Other reports in recent years have compared economic or population indicators of Adirondack communities with New York State or the U.S. While this report makes those comparisons, it also compares Adirondack communities with other rural areas across the U.S., both with those areas categorized as rural by federal agencies and with those areas with a popu-

lation density similar to that of Adirondack communities.

The period 1970 to 2010 was a period of stagnant economic growth in Rural America. Across the U.S., wages were flat, and economic and population growth largely consolidated in major metropolitan areas. By 2010, 68% of the land area in the lower 48 U.S. states was categorized as rural, yet this area was home to just 14.9% of the country's population. Adirondack communities share a similar population density of around 11 people per square mile with rural communities that stretch across 62% of the lower 48 states, a vast but thinly populated landscape that is home to just 6.6% of the U.S. population.

If there were negative economic impacts from environmental protections in the Adirondack Park, the region would stand out as significantly different from other rural areas in trends for median household income, per capita income, poverty rate, and rates of employment and self-employment. Any negative trends due to environmental protection would be clearly evident over the past 40 years. Far from unique, the economic and population challenges facing the Adirondacks are the norm in Rural America. In many cases, Adirondack communities experienced economic growth that was far better than that of vast areas of Rural America. The Key Findings section on pages 6–7 show this reality.

Adirondack communities are experiencing population patterns similar to those of other rural areas, including decreased school enrollments, the loss of college-age young people, low recruitment of career-age people, and a large older population. One out of every six counties in the U.S. has a median age equal to or older than that of the Adirondack Park. In Rural America it's one out of every four counties. From 1970 to 2010, one quarter of all counties in the U.S. lost population, but fully one-third of the counties in Rural

America lost population. From 2000 to 2010, nearly half of all counties in Rural America lost population.

While the Adirondack Park has an exceptional, internationally recognized landscape of mountains, forests, wetlands, lakes, and rivers, there is nothing exceptional about the long-term economic or population trends of Adirondack communities. What is happening in the Adirondacks is the same thing that is happening across Rural America.

The findings in this report are eye-opening. Far from unique, the economic and population experiences in the Adirondacks are the norm in Rural America. It must be recognized that when the conventional wisdom or popular narratives insist that socio-economic difficulties so common throughout Rural America are caused in the Adirondacks by environmental protections, the remedies most often proposed threaten the open-space character and ecological integrity of the Park. A more logical interpretation of this report's data would conclude that the comparative economic success of Adirondack communities is the consequence of environmental protections. In this perspective the test of effective economic development initiatives is the degree to which they enhance or at least complement, rather than degrade, environmental protections.

Protect the Adirondacks is dedicated to protecting the natural resources and open spaces of the Adirondack Park. Healthy and viable human communities living in mutually sustaining relations with the intact and recovering ecosystems and wildlands around them constitute the rare and essential identity of the Adirondack Park. In the years ahead, it is our aim to use the findings of this report to help shape investment and public policy to stabilize and strengthen Adirondack communities. □

## Key Findings

This report does what has never been done before in the Adirondack Park: analyze the economic and population experience of Adirondack Park communities compared with other areas across New York State, the United States, and Rural America. We undertook this analysis to test longstanding claims that economic development and the population vitality of Adirondack communities have been harmed by environmental protections. If Adirondack communities had experienced negative impacts from environmental protections, this would be plainly seen in a nationwide analysis of 40 years of economic and population data of New York State and the United States from 1970 to 2010. The conclusion reached in this nationwide analysis found that the experiences of Adirondack communities are consistent with the major trends in Rural America in these years.

The findings in this report stand out starkly from the popular narrative about the singular negative experience of Adirondack communities due to environmental protections. This report shows that Adirondack communities generally had stronger economic performances than many other rural areas across the U.S. and population trends that were consistent with many other rural areas across the U.S.

From 1970 to 2010, Adirondack communities generally posted stronger growth of income and employment and had a lower poverty rate than did other rural areas. The Park's slight population decline in recent years is due to a combination of factors that plague rural areas, including the loss of college-age young people, low recruitment of career age adults, and mortality among its high population of older residents. The loss of college age young people and the mortality of old people are strong trends across Rural America. This report found that unlike many other rural areas, the Adirondacks recruits career age adults and retirees, but has a lower birth rate than other rural areas.

### General

When compared with areas across New York State, the United States, and Rural America, the economic performance and population trends experienced by the 62 towns fully within the Adirondack Park from 1970 to 2010 exceeded or were consistent with those of other rural areas.

### Median Household Income Trends

From 1970 to 2010, the Park Towns' increase in median household income of 7.5% exceeded the New York State increase of 0.7% and the national decrease of -0.6%.

From 1970 to 2010, the Park Towns saw a higher growth in median household income than did 1,087 rural counties, home to 67% of the population of Rural America.

In 2010, the Park Towns had a higher median household income than did 86% of Rural America counties, home to 85% of the population of Rural America.

### Per Capita Income Trends

The Park Towns' increase in per capita income of 80.6% from 1970 to 2010 exceeded the New York State increase of 58.5% and the national increase of 57.9%.

The Park Towns' increase in per capita income from 1970 to 2010 exceeded that of 1,382 rural counties, home to 79% of the population of Rural America.

The Park Towns' per capita income in 2010 of \$26,248 exceeded the national level of \$23,300 and that of other rural areas, but lagged behind the New York State level of \$27,274.

The Park Towns' 2010 per capita income was higher than that of 1,656 rural counties, home to 87% of the residents of Rural America.

### Poverty Rate Trends

From 1970 to 2010, the poverty rate of the Park Towns increased by 1.6 percentage points. This was less than the New York State increase of 6.9 percentage points and the U.S. increase of 4.5 percentage points.

The Park Towns' 1.6 percentage point increase in its poverty rate from 1970 to 2010 was lower than that of 76% of the Rural Northeast U.S. counties.

The Park Towns' 2010 poverty rate was lower than that of 2,261 U.S. counties, home to 69% of the U.S. population.

The Park Towns' 2010 poverty rate was lower than that of 1,522 rural counties, home to 83% of the population of Rural America.

### Employment Trends

The increase in the Park Towns' employment rate for people 16 years of age or older from 1970 to 2010 was greater than increases for New York State and the U.S.

The Park Towns' 2010 employment rate of 53.8% lagged behind New York State's rate of 57.7% and the U.S. rate of 57.6%.

The Park Towns' 12.6% growth in its employment rate from 1970 to 2010 was higher than that of 1,272 rural counties, home to 74% of the population of Rural America.

The Park Towns' 2010 employment rate of 53.8% was higher than that of 1,043 rural counties, home to 58% of the population of Rural America.

### Self-Employment Trends

The increase in the Park Towns' self-employment rate of people 16 years of age or older from 1970 to 2010 was greater than the increases for the U.S. and other rural



## Key Findings

areas but lagged behind New York State.

The Park Towns' 2010 self-employment rate of 6.6% was higher than the rates of New York State and the U.S.

The Park Towns' 2010 self-employment rate of 6.6% was higher than that of 2,044 counties, home to 79% of the population of the U.S.

The Park Towns' 2010 self-employment rate of 6.6% was higher than that of 1,114 rural counties, home to 72% of the population of Rural America.

### Growth of Total Taxable Assessments in New York

Of the 62 Park Towns, 53 exceeded the New York median for growth in Total Taxable Assessments (the total land and improvements values in a town), while 9 were below. The majority of Park Towns had property assessment value growth that exceeded the state median.

### 2000-2010 Short-Term Economic Comparisons

From 2000 to 2010, the Park Towns experienced stronger performances in five standard economic indicators than did the majority of New York State, the U.S. and Rural America.

### Population Trends

From 1970 to 2010, the Park Towns' population increased by 11.6%, a rate that exceeded New York State's population growth of 6.2%.

The Park Towns' population increase from 1970 to 2010 was higher than that of 1,145 counties with 22% of the U.S. population and 935 rural counties with 33% of the population of Rural America.

In 2010, the Park Towns were part of a vast



American landscape of declining population. This area consisted of 1,082 counties, covered 32% of the U.S. land area, and was home to over 43.3 million people.

### Median Age Trends

The Park Towns' median age in 2010 was 45.7 years, similar to the median age of 45.0 years of the Low Density Northeast counties, but much higher than New York State's median age of 37.9 years and the U.S. median age of 37.1 years.

In 2010, even though the Park Towns' median age of 45.7 years was one of the highest in the U.S., there were 525 counties across the U.S., one out of every six counties, with a population of over 13.4 million people, that had a higher median age.

### Ratio of Children to Adults of Childbearing Age Trends

From 1970 to 2010, the Park Towns' ratio of children (0-14 years old) to adults of childbearing age (20 to 44 years old) decreased by 50%, greater than that of other areas.

In 2010, the Park Towns' ratio of children to adults of childbearing age was 0.57:1, similar to New York State's ratio of 0.53:1 and the U.S. ratio of 0.59:1, but lower than that of other rural areas outside the Northeast U.S.

In 2010, over 10 million New Yorkers and over 102 million Americans lived in places

with a lower ratio of children to adults of childbearing age than that of the Park Towns.

### NYS School District Enrollment Trends

From 1970 to 2010, the 672 New York State school districts we analyzed experienced a loss of 665,293 students, not including New York City. Across New York 88% of school districts in our analysis experienced decreased enrollment in those years. Over 64% of New York school districts experienced a 25% or greater loss of students.

### Age Group Trends

The study of different age groups, starting with the group born between 1936 and 1945 and ending with the group born between 1986 and 1995, revealed key patterns of population gains and losses in the nine regions. The Park Towns lost college age young people in their late teens and early 20s at a rate of over 4,000 people per decade. The Park Towns recruited career age people after age 35 years old in low numbers. The Park Towns also recruited people of retirement age starting at age 55. Recruitment of career age people at 35 years of age and retirees did not recoup the loss of college age young people. This pattern of major loss of college age young people and minor recruitment of career age adults, with regional variation in the recruitment of retirees, dominates population dynamics across Rural America. □



## Introduction

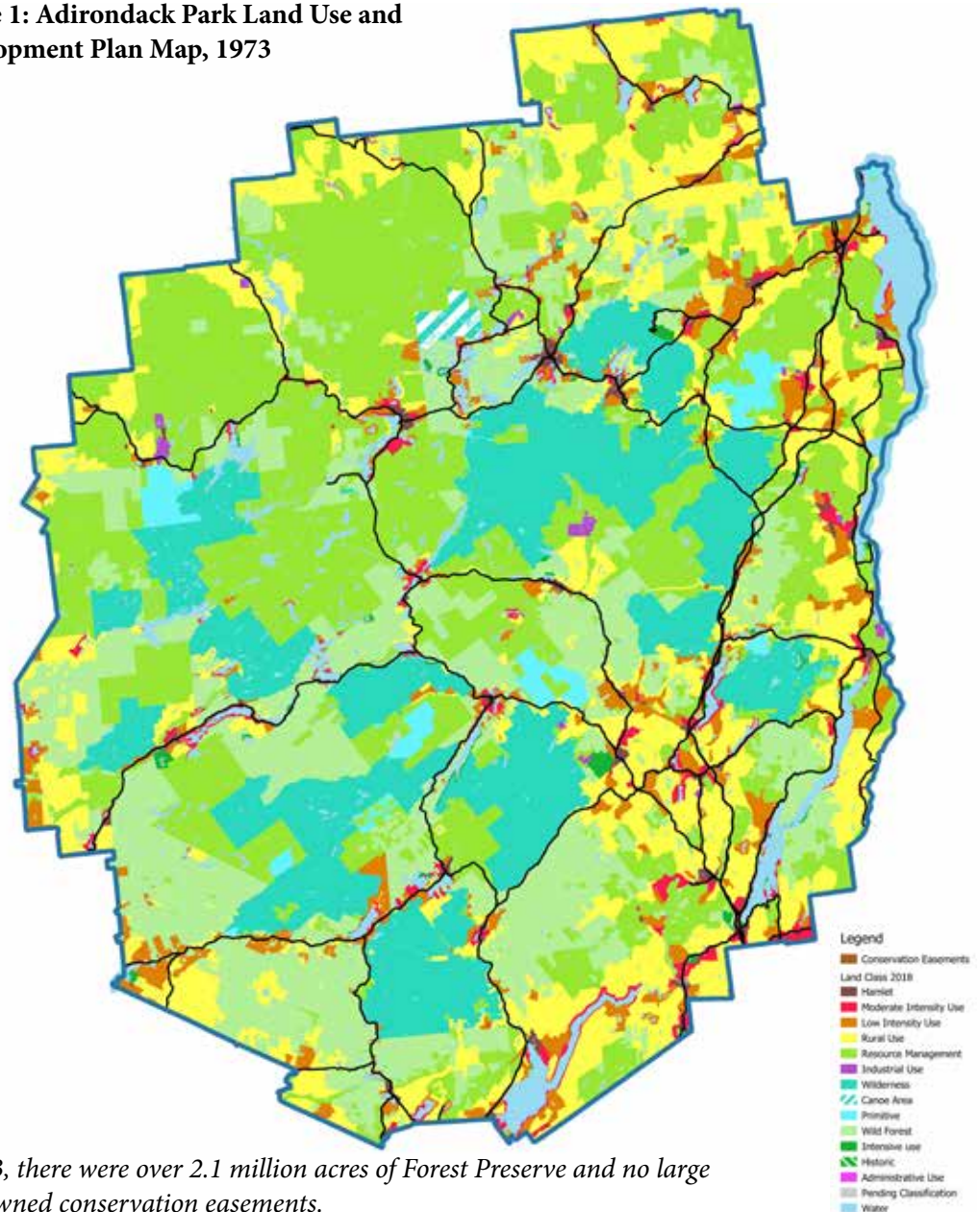
Along with local politicians, business leaders, many different organizations, and ordinary citizens, Protect the Adirondacks is concerned about the future of Adirondack communities. As in many communities across Rural America, the Adirondack Park population is aging, school enrollments are shrinking, high quality jobs are few, and many communities are experiencing small population declines. A popular explanation for these negative trends in the Adirondacks pins the blame for these realities on environmental protection. Though this claim, that conservation is bad for the economy and bad for people, lacks evidence, it is routinely invoked to justify weakening environmental regulations in the Adirondack Park.

Old misconceptions about the special burden or economic hardships placed on Adirondack communities and residents by environmental protections die hard. Complaints about the supposed harshest environmental rules in New York or the U.S. are often followed by claims about unique negative impacts inflicted on the Adirondack economy and population.

An analysis of 40 years of economic and population trends tells a different story. The reality is far different and far more nuanced than the claims above insist. If there was a distinct negative impact on Adirondack communities as a result of environmental protections from 1970 to 2010, then it would stand to reason that these impacts would be clearly seen in 40-year trends for median household income, per capita income, the poverty rate, employment rates, and population growth. After our investigation of these important economic and population measures, we can say with confidence that there is no discernible negative impact: Adirondack communities have either surpassed or were consistent with rural areas across the United States.

In fact, a strong argument exists for a

**Figure 1: Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan Map, 1973**



*In 1973, there were over 2.1 million acres of Forest Preserve and no large state-owned conservation easements.*

counter narrative that the Adirondack Park's relatively stable economic and population position, when compared to other rural areas across the U.S., is due to critical investments in environmental protection that have made the Adirondacks a dynamic rural area where many people desire to visit, own property, and move to as career age adults or retirees.

While this report emphasizes issues that pertain to the economic and social welfare of Adirondack communities and focuses on the rebuttal of the claim that conservation does Adirondack people significant harm, we want to be clear that

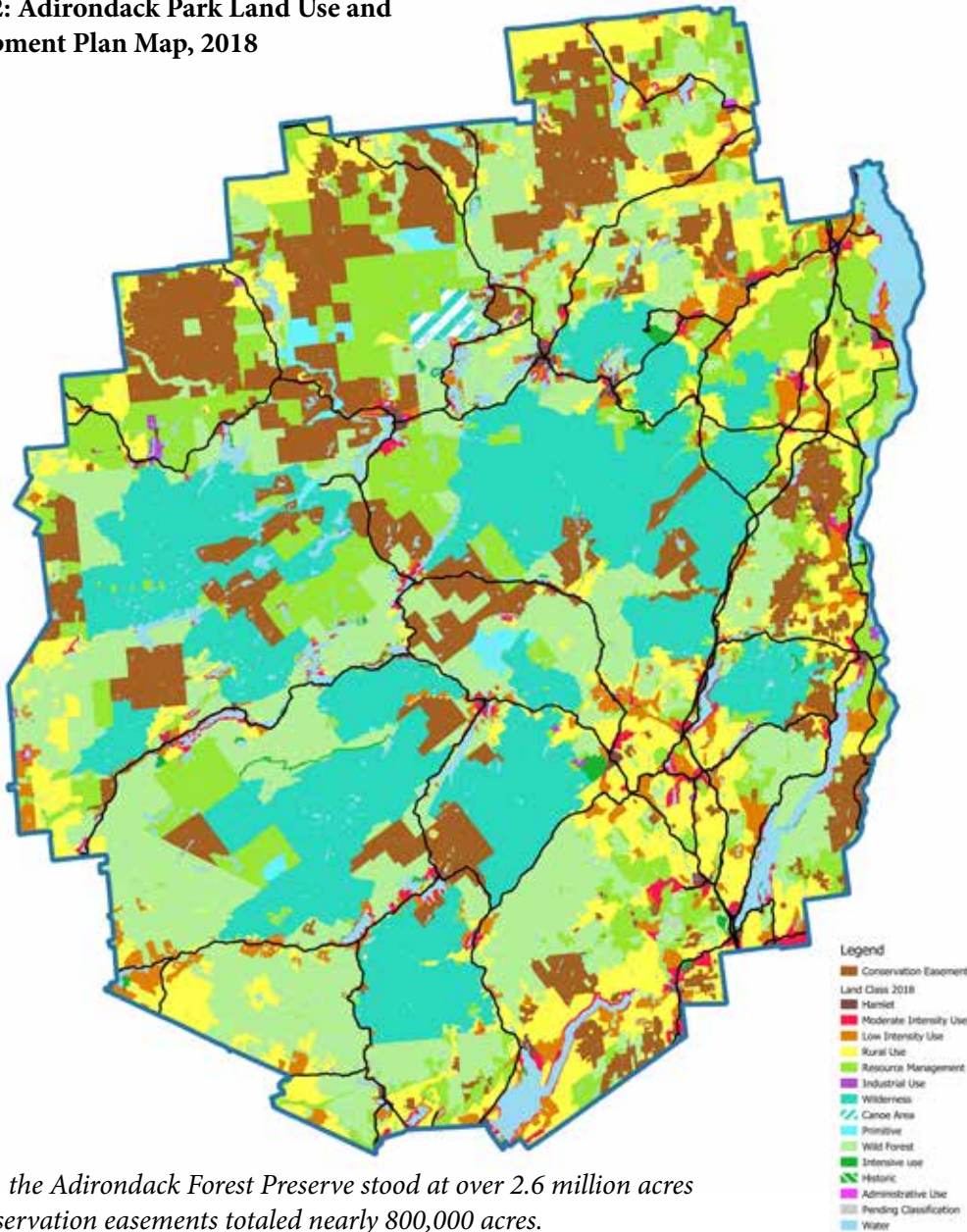
we do not believe that the justification of conservation in the Adirondacks stands or falls with the success of our position on these matters. There are reasons other than economic ones to conserve wilderness, ranging from aesthetic to spiritual to preserving the integrity of natural systems. We do not address these considerations here, but for many they are primary. What we do show is that we can pursue conservation energetically without harming our friends and neighbors. Indeed, conservation is typically more of an economic asset than a liability.

The years between 1970 and 2010 saw



## Introduction

**Figure 2: Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan Map, 2018**



*By 2018, the Adirondack Forest Preserve stood at over 2.6 million acres and conservation easements totaled nearly 800,000 acres.*

dramatic changes in the nature of environmental protection in the Adirondacks. These changes occurred on three fronts: a) the enlargement of the Forest Preserve by purchases of over 400,000 acres; b) the institution of regional land use planning and zoning on private land through the Adirondack Park Agency Act; and c) the protection of nearly 800,000 acres of private land under state-held conservation easements. Do these developments explain an economy that seems stagnant and a population that is aging and contracting? The question we seek to answer in this report is this: Has open-space protection negatively impacted economic and pop-

ulation trends in the Adirondacks during the last half-century?

We approach this question carefully, with detailed analysis of data from the U.S. Census and other sources. If there had been a negative economic or population impact, it would be seen clearly in the data from 1970 to 2010. If negative impacts were evident, they would stand out when Adirondack communities are compared with other areas in New York, the U.S., the rural Northeast, and Rural America. Our analysis concludes that environmental protection has had no discernible negative impact on the Adirondack economy or

population. The argument that conservation in all or any of its forms diminishes economic opportunity and drives people out of the Adirondack Park is false and is not supported by a national analysis of economic and population trends.

The challenges confronting small-business owners and families making a life for themselves in our splendid Adirondack Park are real. We do not dispute them, but understanding their extent and the forces behind them leads us to two further conclusions. First, economically, the Adirondacks are doing better than most similar rural regions across the United States. Yet despite a strong position relative to other rural areas, there remains much about the local economy that can be improved. Second, so long as Adirondack and New York leaders and planners incorrectly attribute economic difficulties to conservation, efforts to improve the circumstances of Adirondack businesses and families will be misdirected and ineffective. We want Adirondack communities to succeed, but to do this they need good information that correctly diagnoses their problems.

The dominant trend in the American population in recent decades is the explosion of economic and population growth in and near metropolitan areas and a concomitant, often precipitous decline in rural areas. The baby boom era after World War II saw a rise in rural populations from the 1950s to the 1970s. The past three decades have marked a dramatic shift in American life as rural areas have stagnated or experienced decline, while most American metropolitan areas have experienced population and economic growth.

From 1970 to 2010, 26% of all U.S. counties lost population compared with losses in 35% of Rural America counties. From 2000 to 2010, 35% of all U.S. counties lost population, compared with losses in 47% of Rural America counties. During these years, the overwhelming majority



## Introduction

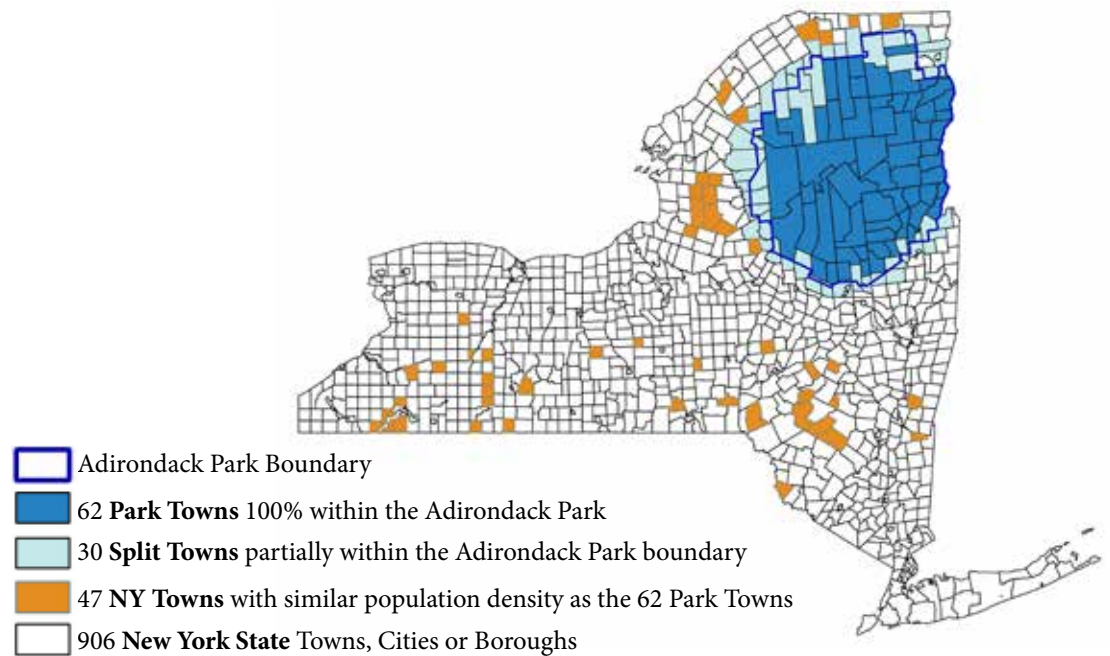
of metropolitan areas grew. Most jobs are now located in metropolitan America. Today, more than 90% of Americans with college and graduate degrees have settled in metropolitan areas, and these areas have a substantially younger population than do rural areas.

In 2010, less than 15% of the U.S. population lived in Rural America, yet this area was home to fully 25% of senior citizens. The graying of Rural America from coast to coast is a major part of the big picture of national population trends and is a major challenge for rural communities. In the Adirondacks this issue is compounded because not only do we have a typical older rural population, but we also recruit retirees whereas many other rural regions see their retirees move away.

The Adirondack Park faces the same economic and population challenges experienced by most of Rural America. While most of the U.S. population grows increasingly urban and connected to the digitized, global economy, Rural America is engaged in a struggle to maintain viable communities, to provide essential services and institutions, and to plan for a future with smaller populations, lower birth rates, and low-growth economies.

To confront the challenges facing the Adirondack Park, we need good data and good analysis. This report aims to provide a fresh understanding of the realities of the Adirondack condition. First, this report compares the Adirondack Park economic and population experience with the overall statewide and national experiences. Second, this report compares Adirondack Park communities with the experiences of other rural areas in New York and U.S. (See all nine regions analyzed in this report on the top of page 11.) Third, this report analyzes the Adirondack Park experience over the past 40 years, a period when the modern Adirondack Park was established.

**Figure 3: New York State geographic regions analyzed in this report**



We were fortunate that U.S. Census data starting in 1970 allowed us to analyze economic and population trends at the municipal level in New York and at the county level across the U.S. This enabled us to make comparisons both across different geographic areas and also across time periods. Data at the town level in the Adirondacks were important. In the past, economic and population studies about the Adirondacks were hampered by the fact that 10 of the 12 Adirondack counties are divided by the Park's boundary. This makes it difficult to accurately analyze the Adirondack Park.

To undertake our analysis, we divided the 92 towns in the Adirondack Park into two geographic areas to be compared with other regions. First, we used the 62 towns fully within the boundary of the Adirondack Park (referred to henceforth as the "Park Towns") by aggregating their economic and population data. In 2010, these communities were home to 103,953 people, 80% of the Park's estimated total population of 130,000. While there is variation within these communities, they have similar land use controls and environmental protections.

Second, we grouped the 30 towns that are split by the Blue Line ("Split Towns"). Much of the population and economic activities within these communities are outside the Park, but it is impossible to determine how much, so we combined the economic and population data for these 30 towns. In 2010, these towns were home to 126,261 people, an estimated 20% of whom lived inside the Adirondack Park. See Figure 3 above for the locations of the Park Towns and Split Towns. There was no cherry-picking of towns for different analysis. They were either completely within the Blue Line or split by it.

The nine geographic areas selected for this report (see Table 1 above right for descriptions) were areas that either have a similar population density as the 62 Park Towns or represent large geographic areas, such as New York State, the lower 48 U.S. states, or the non-metropolitan counties of Rural America. The Methods section lays out the exact process. The goal of this study was to compare the Adirondacks with New York State, the U.S., and other rural areas. We looked at a series of basic indicators to assess the economic and population experiences of Adirondack communities

## Introduction

**Table 1: Nine geographic areas analyzed in this report**

1. 62 towns that are completely within the Adirondack Park referred to throughout this report as the <b>Park Towns</b> . In 2010, the Park Towns had a combined population of 103,953 people and a population density of 14.5 people per square mile.	<b>York State</b> , excluding the Park Towns and Split Towns. In 2010, this area had a population of 19,133,751 people.	located from Pennsylvania to Maine. In 2010, they had a population of 4.3 million people. This area constitutes the “Rural Northeast” in this report.
2. 30 towns that ring the Adirondack Park and are split by the Adirondack Park boundary, referred to throughout this report as the <b>Split Towns</b> . In 2010, the Split Towns had a combined population of 126,261 people.	5. All 3,096 U.S. counties, boroughs, parishes, and cities, etc., in the lower 48 U.S. states referred to as <b>United States</b> . In 2010, this area had a population of 305,654,584 people.	8. 1,357 counties referred to as <b>Low Density U.S.</b> In 2010, this set of counties had a median population density equal to the population density of the combined 62 Park Towns. In 2010, this area had a population of over 20.2 million, 6.6% of the population, and this area covered 62% of the lower 48 states of U.S. Data for the Low Density U.S. area are listed in tables.
3. 47 New York State towns referred to as the <b>Rural NY Towns</b> . These towns had a median population density equal to the median population density of the 62 Park Towns. In 2010, these towns had a population of 61,075 people.	6. 1,941 counties classified as “non-metro” by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and referred to as <b>USDA Non-Metro U.S.</b> counties. In 2010, this area had a population of over 45.4 million people, 14.9% of the population, and covered 68% of the lower 48 states of the U.S. This area constitutes “Rural America” in this report.	9. 16 rural northeast U.S. counties referred to as <b>Low Density NE</b> . These counties are a subset of the Low Density U.S. counties and are located from Pennsylvania to Maine. In 2010, these counties had a population of 498,361 people. Data for the Low Density NE area are listed in tables.
4. The 906 New York State towns, boroughs, cities, etc., referred to as <b>New</b>	7. 80 rural counties in the northeast U.S. referred to as <b>USDA Non-Metro NE</b> . These counties are a subset of the 1,941 USDA Non-Metro counties and are	

from 1970 to 2010. On the economic side, we analyzed:

- Median household income
- Per capita income
- Poverty rate
- Employment (percent employed of total population 16 years and older)
- Self-Employment (percent self-employed of total population 16 years and older)
- Total assessment values of New York Towns.

On the population side we analyzed:

- Population growth
- Age group growth/loss
- Median age
- Ratio of children to adults
- School district enrollments in New York State
- 2000 to 2010 short-term population changes.

Each of these indicators is explained, analyzed, and graphically illustrated in a discrete section of this report. We selected 1970 as our starting point because it coincides with the creation of the modern Adirondack Park through the Adirondack Park Agency Act and the beginning of a major era of Forest Preserve expansion and purchase of conservation easements. U.S. Census data starting in 1970 were available and enabled us to assess leading economic and population variables over a span of 40 years at both the town level across New York and the county level across the U.S.

With the clearer picture of Adirondack realities and challenges that this report provides, we have an opportunity to plan efficiently and to direct state investments and private initiatives in appropriate and productive directions. Good data and sound analysis should drive public policy. The Adirondack Park serves as a model for sustainability, open-space protection,

and viable human communities living in harmony with the Eastern United States’ only great and last remaining wilderness. A clear understanding of our long-term economic and population experiences invites us to consider open space conservation not as an obstacle, but as a reliable basis for strengthening and sustaining viable communities across the Adirondack Park.

### Rural America

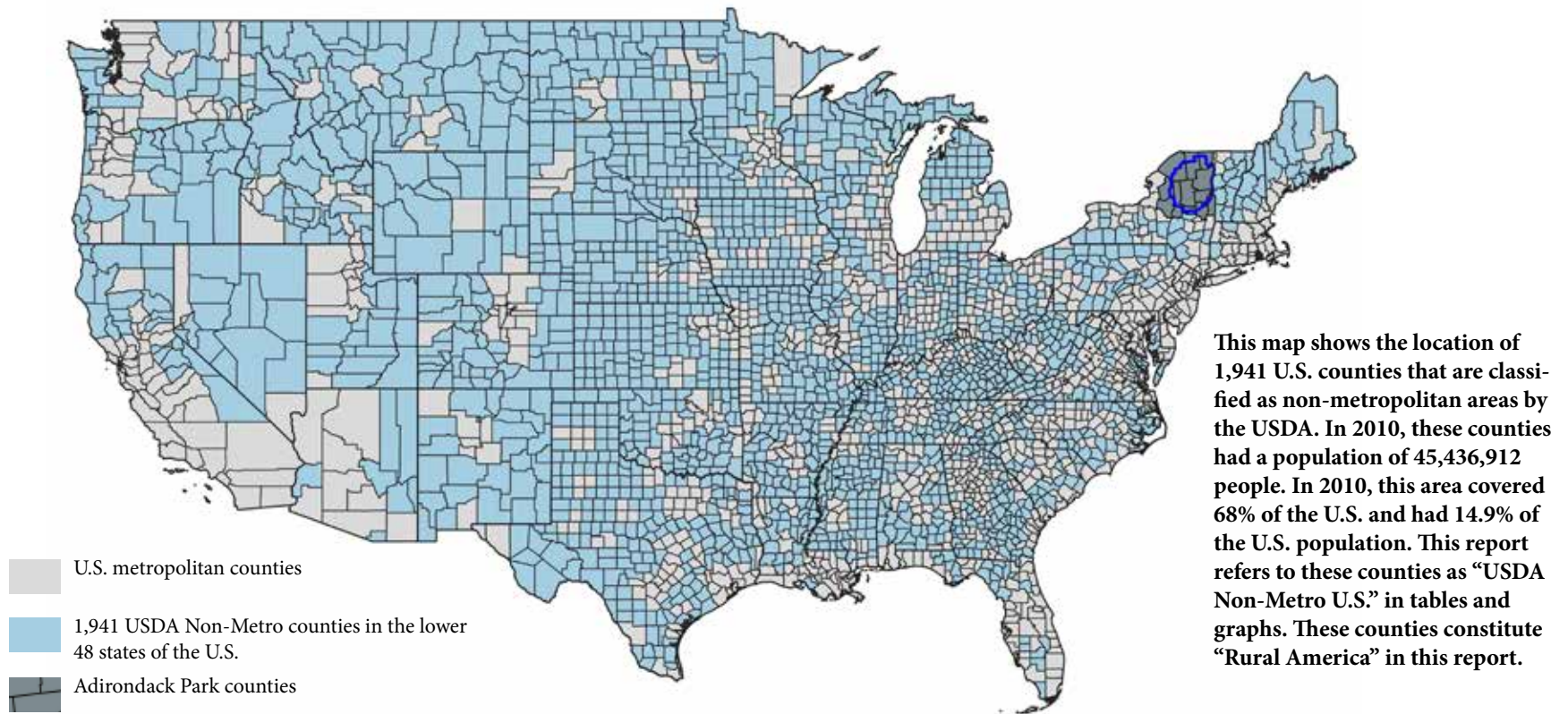
This report focuses in large part on a comparison of leading economic and population indicators between Adirondack Park communities and an area of the United States called Rural America. This report compares the 62 Adirondack “Park Towns” and 30 Adirondack “Split Towns” with four subsets of Rural America.

The main area of Rural America used in this report consists of 1,941 counties in the U.S. defined as non-metropolitan areas by



## Introduction

**Figure 4: 1,941 USDA Non-Metro counties in the United States**

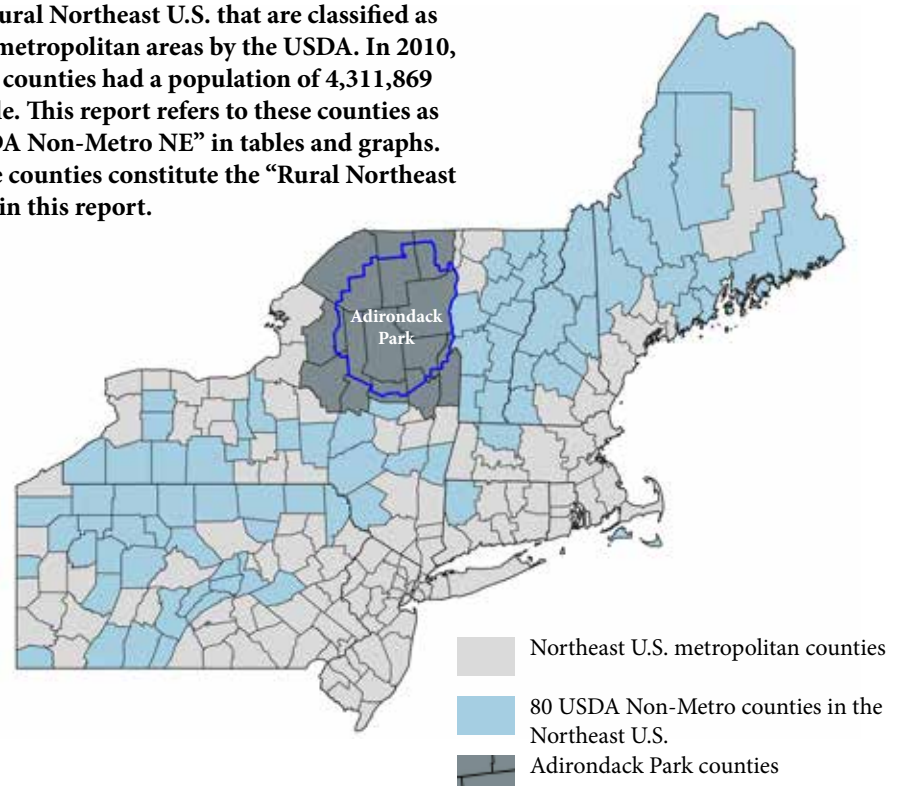


the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). In 2010, the USDA “non-metro” counties covered a vast landscape in the U.S., nearly 68% of the area of the lower 48 states, and was home to over 45.4 million people, some 14.9% of the total U.S. population. In this report these are called the “USDA Non-Metro counties” and constitute Rural America. This configuration of USDA non-metro counties is commonly used in research concerning Rural America. Figure 4 above shows the locations of these 1,941 rural counties.

In many ways the economic and population trends of the rural Northeast counties stand out from other rural areas in the U.S. This report also compares the rural counties in the Northeast U.S. (nine states from Pennsylvania and New Jersey north to Maine) to the Park Towns. Figure 5 shows 80 rural counties in the Northeast that are a subset of the 1,941 USDA non-metro counties. These 80 counties were home to over 4.3 million people in 2010 and are referred to as “Rural Northeast U.S.” counties in this report.

**Figure 5: 80 USDA Non-Metro counties in the Northeast United States**

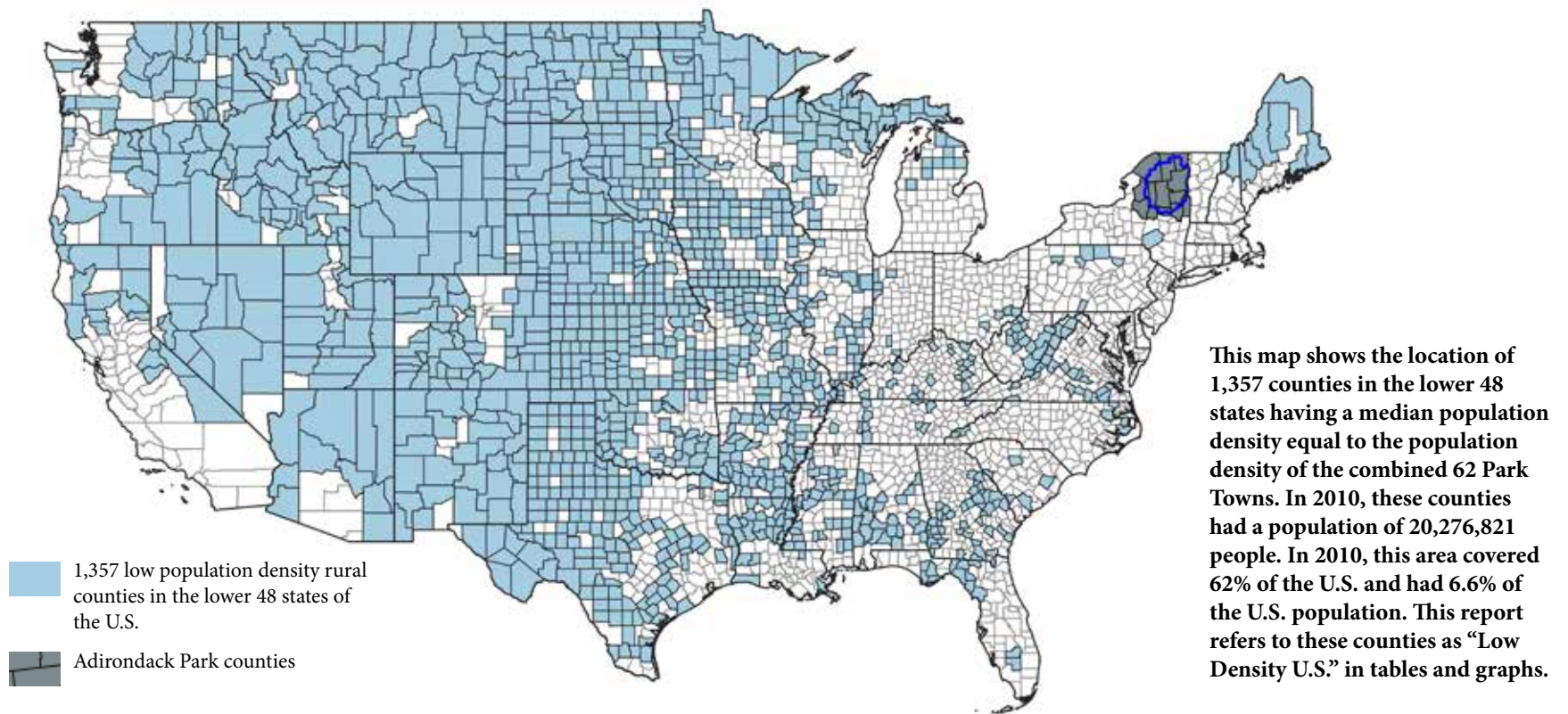
This map shows the location of 80 counties in the Rural Northeast U.S. that are classified as non-metropolitan areas by the USDA. In 2010, these counties had a population of 4,311,869 people. This report refers to these counties as “USDA Non-Metro NE” in tables and graphs. These counties constitute the “Rural Northeast U.S.” in this report.





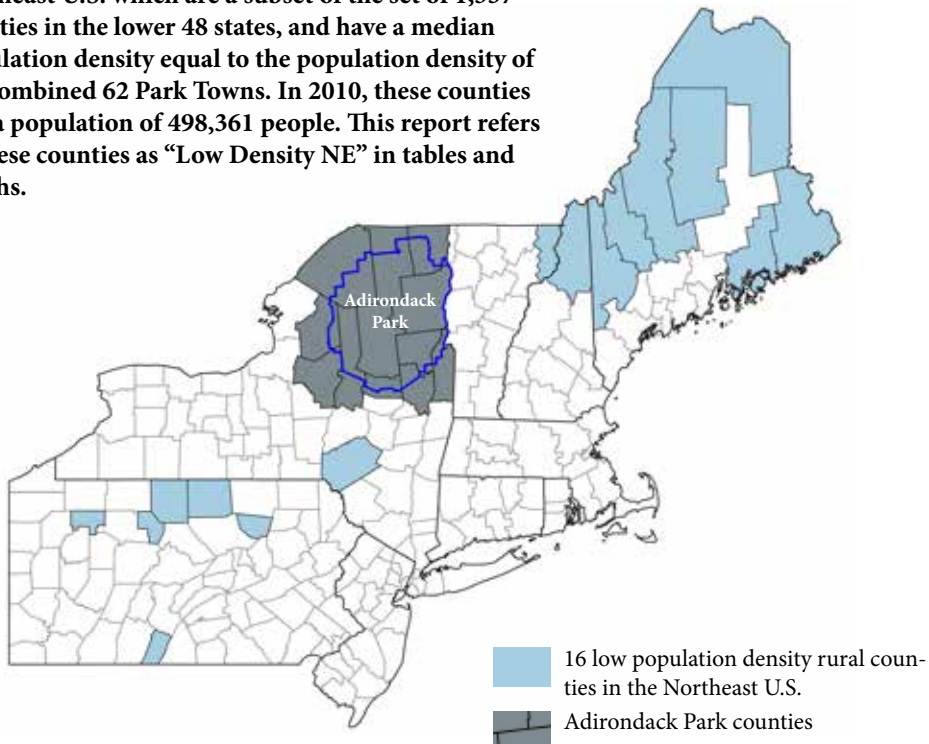
## Introduction

**Figure 6: 1,357 Low Population Density counties in the United States**



**Figure 7: 16 Low Population Density counties in the Northeast United States**

This map shows the location of 16 counties in the Northeast U.S. which are a subset of the set of 1,357 counties in the lower 48 states, and have a median population density equal to the population density of the combined 62 Park Towns. In 2010, these counties had a population of 498,361 people. This report refers to these counties as “Low Density NE” in tables and graphs.



The second rural region studied in this report is the low population density counties of the lower 48 states of the U.S. In 2010, there were 1,357 counties in the U.S. with a median population density equal to the population density of the combined 62 Park Towns. These counties had a population of over 20 million people. Their area comprised 62% of the lower 48 states, but they were home to just 6.6% of the total U.S. population. These are very thinly populated counties, similar to the interior areas of the Adirondack Park. In this report these are called “Low Density U.S. counties.” Figure 6 above shows the location of these counties.

There are 16 rural counties in the Northeast U.S. that are a subset of the 1,357 Low Density U.S. counties. These counties have a population density similar to the Park Towns. These 16 counties were home to 498,361 people in 2010. These counties are referred to as “Low Density NE” in this report. Figure 7 shows these 16 counties.



## Introduction

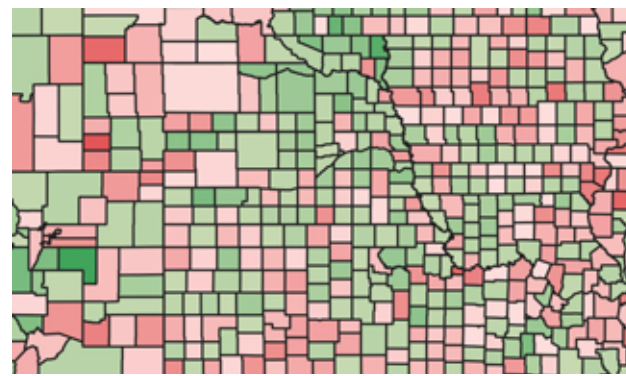
### How to Read this Report

This report provides information about economic and population indicators. Information is presented that compares the experience of the 62 Adirondack Park Towns (“Park Towns”) with eight other geographic areas in New York and the U.S. This report provides findings about long-term trends from 1970 to 2010 and “snapshot” comparisons from 2010 between the Park Towns and other areas.

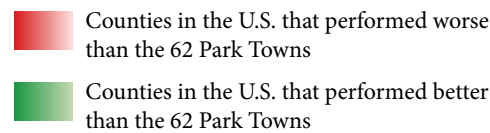
In this report, information is presented in tables, graphs, and maps. This report primarily uses “gradient” maps (choropleths), which means that the maps for all towns, etc., in New York State and all counties in the U.S. are color coded to show on a scale whether these places performed better or worse than the 62 Park Towns for various economic or population indicators. Throughout this report, red areas on maps show places that performed worse than the Park Towns and green areas show those places that performed better. The darkness or lightness of the shading shows the degree to which a county or town was better or worse than the Park Towns. Gray colored counties are metropolitan counties that are not analyzed in the Rural America maps, which focus solely on rural counties.

Figure 8 shows two details of gradient maps used in this report. The top map is a detail of a U.S. map indicating counties that fared better (green) or worse (red) than the Park Towns. The lower map is a detail of a Rural America map with red and green shaded counties as well as metropolitan counties shaded gray. Figure 9 shows examples of two gradient maps, one for the U.S. (top) and one for Rural America (bottom). The top U.S. map compares growth in median household income from 1970 to 2010 of the Park Towns with that of all counties across the U.S. The lower map compares 2010 median household income of the Park Towns with that of Rural America counties. □

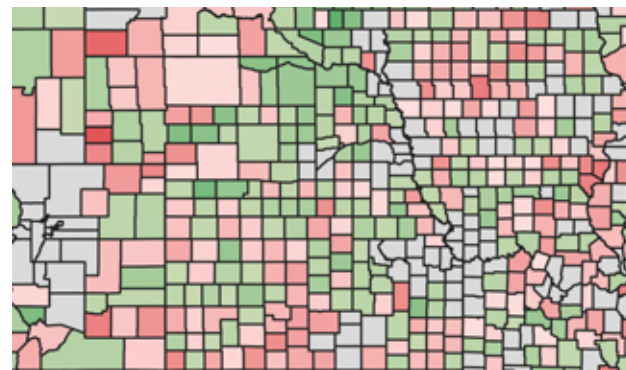
**Figure 8: Details from gradient maps used in this report**



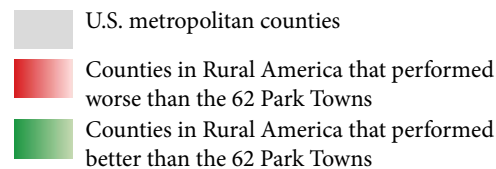
**Detail from a U.S. map used in this report**



*This report utilizes gradient maps to present information on long-term trends from 1970 to 2010 and 2010 snapshot comparisons of the experience of the 62 Park Towns in the Adirondacks with New York State, the United States, and rural areas in the Northeast U.S. and across Rural America. Throughout this report the color red shows a county or town that performed worse than the Park Towns, while green shows a county or town that performed better. The colors are presented on a gradient according to how much they are worse than the Park Towns (light to dark red) to how much they are better than the Park Towns (light to dark green). Gradient maps are used throughout this report for all indicators. These maps are accompanied by summary information. These maps are used at the state level in New York with town-, city- or borough-level data and at the national level in the U.S. with county-level data. The figure above shows a detail from a U.S. map with counties scaled accordingly.*



**Detail from a Rural America map used in this report**

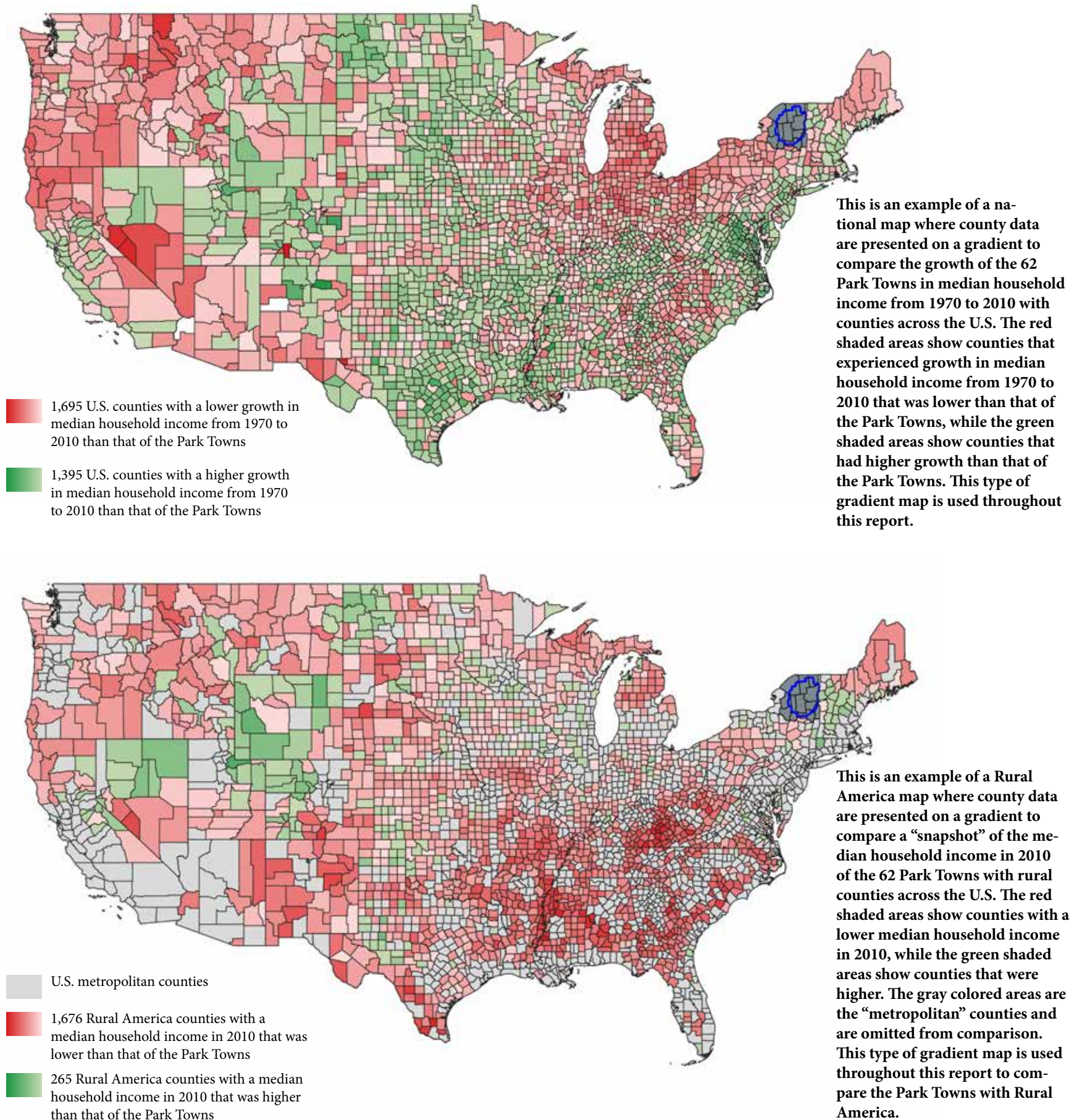


*Another variation of the gradient map presents information just for rural counties. In these maps, data for rural counties are presented on a gradient of green and red colors, while all “metropolitan” counties, the more heavily populated urban and dense suburban areas, are shaded gray. The “metropolitan” counties follow the Rural-Urban Continuum Code system of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These maps are used to compare the 62 Park Towns against other rural areas. These maps are used at the national level for Rural America and at the regional level for the Northeast U.S. The figure above shows a detail from a Rural America map with county data shown on a gradient accordingly.*



## Introduction

**Figure 9: Examples of gradient maps used in this report**





## Median Household Income Trends: Adirondack Park vs New York State

### Key Findings

From 1970 to 2010, the Park Towns' increase in median household income of 7.5% exceeded the New York State increase of 0.7% and the national decrease of -0.6%.

From 1970 to 2010, the Park Towns saw a higher growth in median household income than did 1,087 rural counties, home to 67% of the population of Rural America.

In 2010, the Park Towns had a higher median household income than did 86% of Rural America counties, home to 85% of the population of Rural America.

**Table 2: Change in Median Household Income in New York and U.S., 1970–2010 (inflation adjusted)**

Area	1970	2010	Change
<b>New York State</b>	<b>\$61,331</b>	<b>\$61,755</b>	<b>0.7%</b>
Rural NY Towns	47,799	48,065	0.6%
Park Towns	46,198	49,681	7.5%
Split Towns	49,343	53,852	9.1%
<b>United States</b>	<b>55,350</b>	<b>55,031</b>	<b>-0.6%</b>

One of the best measurements of the overall economic performance of a region is median household income. Household income is the combined gross income of all members in a household. Median household income is the median of all households in a region. Table 2 (above) shows that median household income, when adjusted for inflation, from 1970 to 2010 across New York State and the U.S., was largely flat. New York grew at just 0.7% and the U.S. saw a decrease of -0.6%.

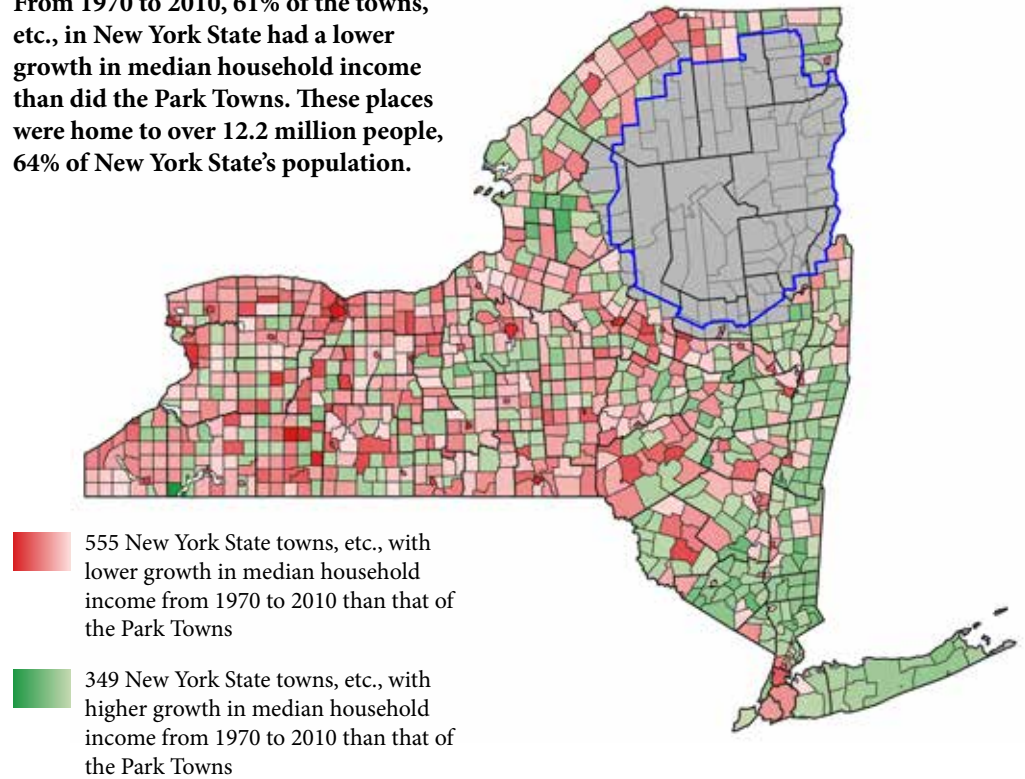
Meanwhile, in those 40 years the Park Towns saw growth in median household income of 7.5% and Split Towns grew by 9.1%. This is much more than New York State (0.7%) and the Rural New York towns (0.6%).

The maps on these two pages compare rates of growth of median household income of the Park Towns with rates in New York State and the U.S.

*continued on page 18*

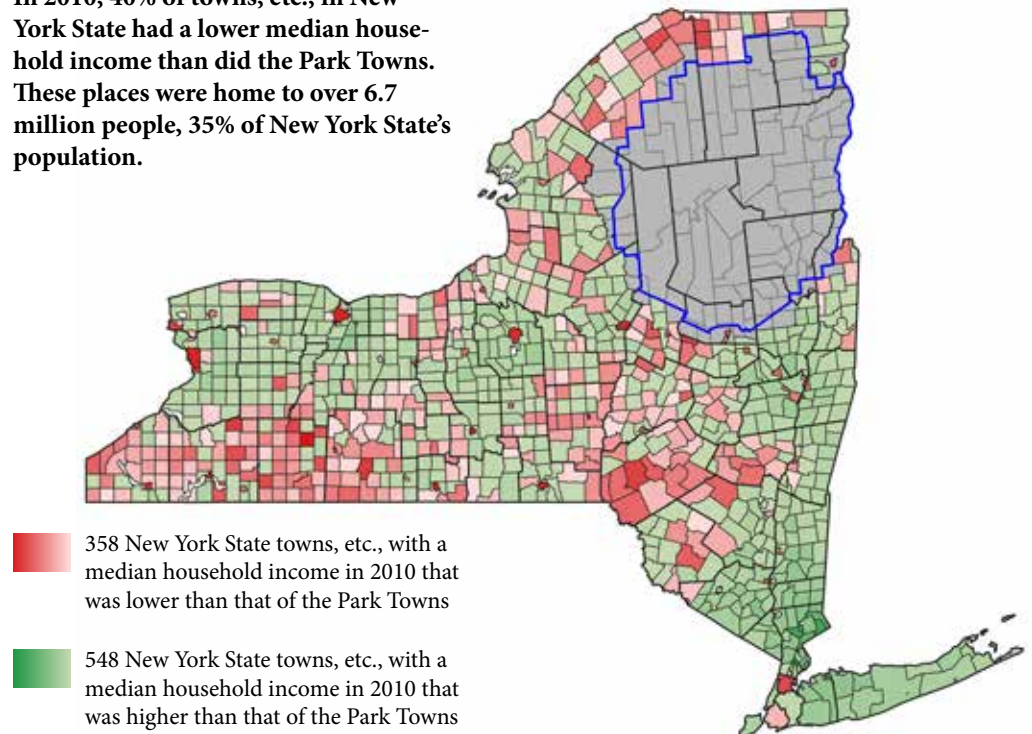
**Figure 10: Comparison of changes in median household income from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and New York State towns, cities, and boroughs**

From 1970 to 2010, 61% of the towns, etc., in New York State had a lower growth in median household income than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 12.2 million people, 64% of New York State's population.



**Figure 11: Comparison of median household income in 2010 between the Park Towns and New York State towns, cities, and boroughs**

In 2010, 40% of towns, etc., in New York State had a lower median household income than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 6.7 million people, 35% of New York State's population.





## Median Household Income Trends: Adirondack Park vs the United States

Figure 12: Comparison of changes in median household income from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and U.S. counties

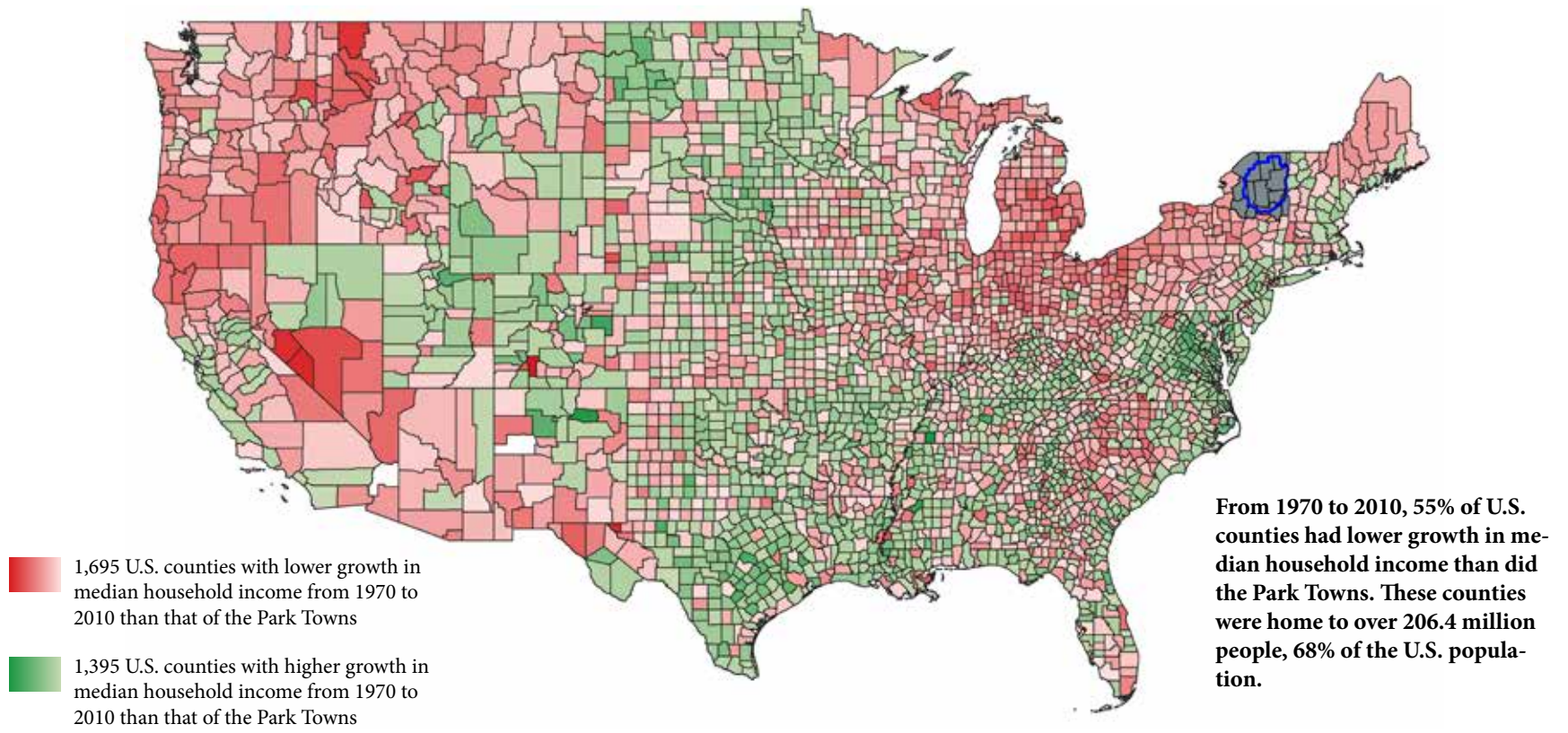
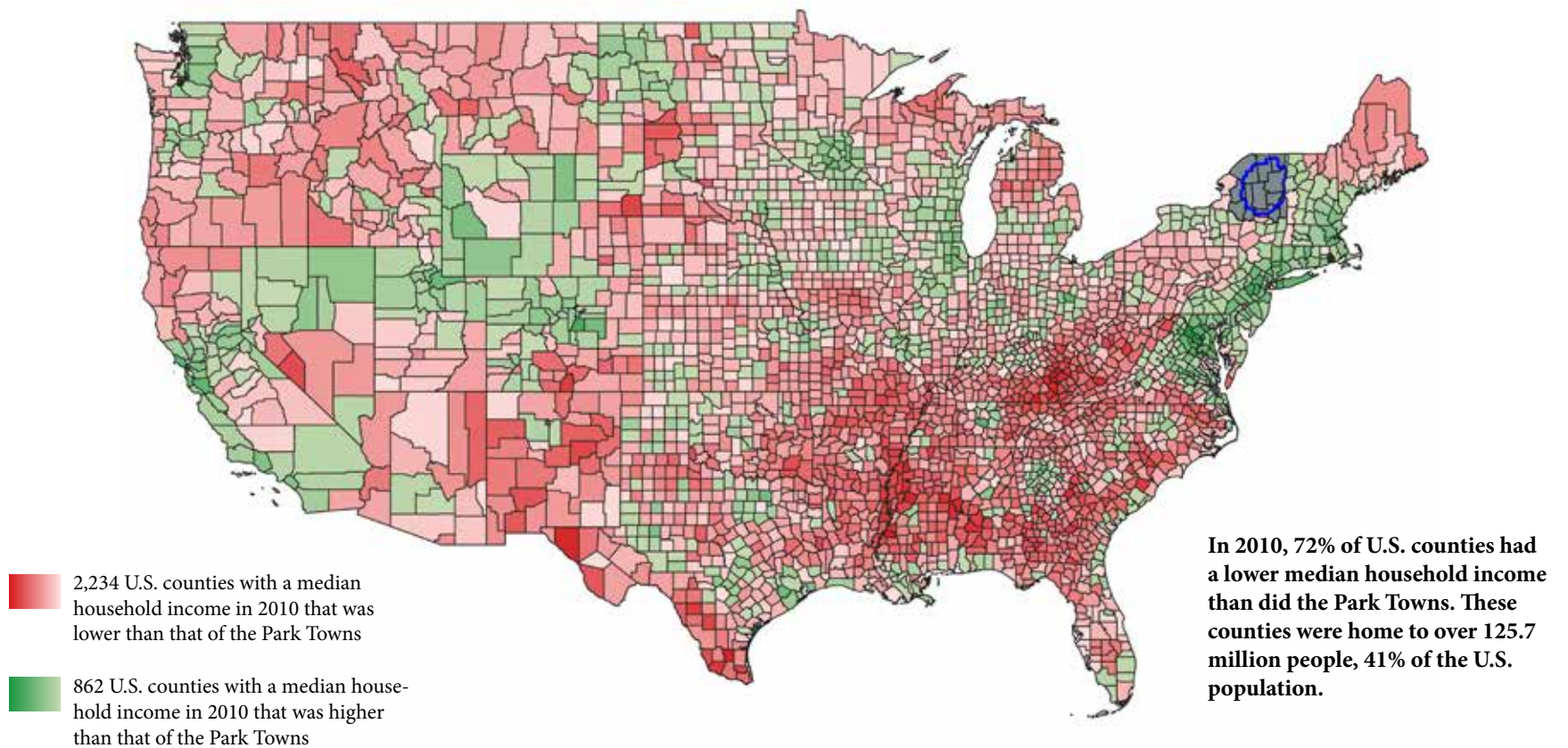


Figure 13: Comparison of median household income in 2010 between the Park Towns and U.S. counties





## Median Household Income Trends: Adirondack Park vs Rural Northeast U.S.

continued from page 16

Figures 10 and 12 show that extensive areas across the state and the nation experienced a rate of growth lower than that of Park Towns. The Park Towns' growth was better than that of areas with 64% of New York State's population, and better than that of areas with 68% of the U.S. population. Figures 11 and 13 show areas in New York State and the U.S. that had a lower median household income in 2010 than did the Park Towns.

**Table 3: Change in Median Household Income in Rural America, 1970–2010 (inflation adjusted)**

Area	1970	2010	Change
Park Towns	\$46,198	\$49,681	7.5%
<b>Rural America</b>			
USDA Non-Metro U.S.	42,018	42,084	0.2%
Low Density U.S.	39,843	42,890	7.6%
USDA Non-Metro NE	48,738	48,030	-1.5%
Low Density NE	43,296	40,955	-5.4%

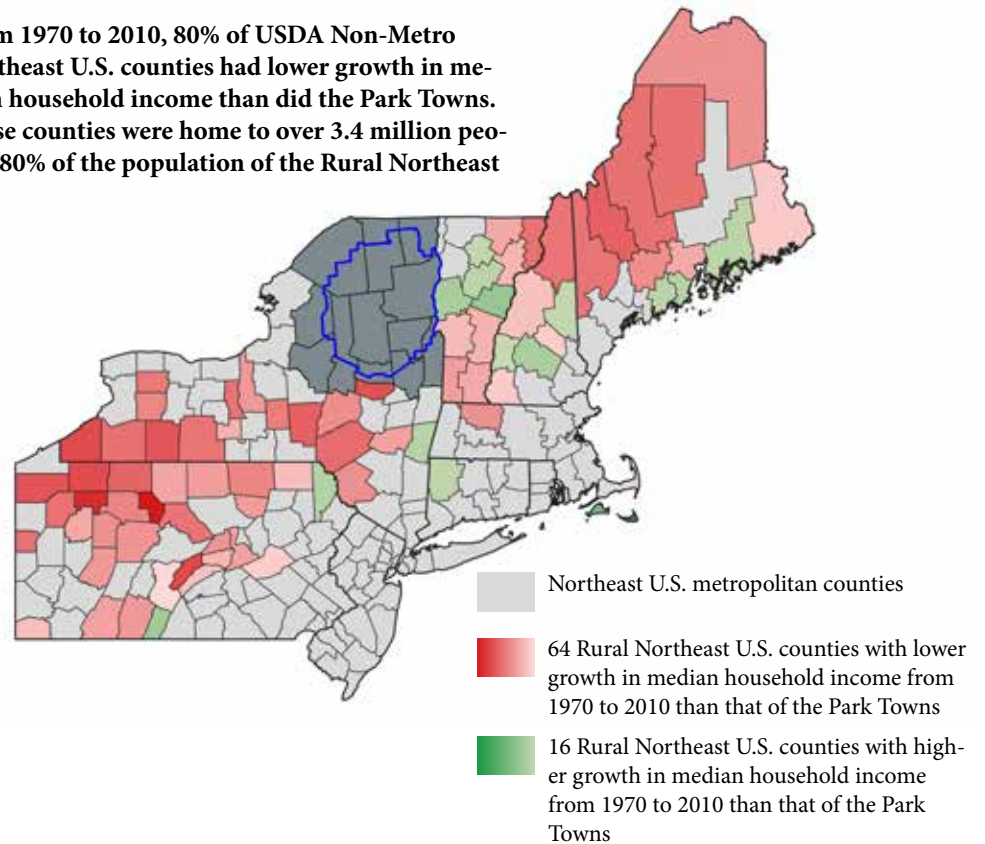
Table 3 (above) shows that the growth of median household income of the Park Towns, when adjusted for inflation, was consistent with or better than that of many areas across Rural America. Note the trends in the rural areas in the Northeast U.S. where the Park Towns experienced significantly better growth in median household income than did many of these counties.

The maps on these pages compare the Park Towns with Rural America. From 1970 to 2010, the Park Towns saw a growth in median household income that was higher than that of areas with 67% of the population of Rural America and 80% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S. In 2010, the Park Towns had a median household income higher than that of areas with 85% of the population of Rural America and 69% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.

In sum, analysis of median household income trends shows that Park Towns' households saw their income grow at a greater rate than did the majority of areas across New York State, the U.S., and Rural America. □

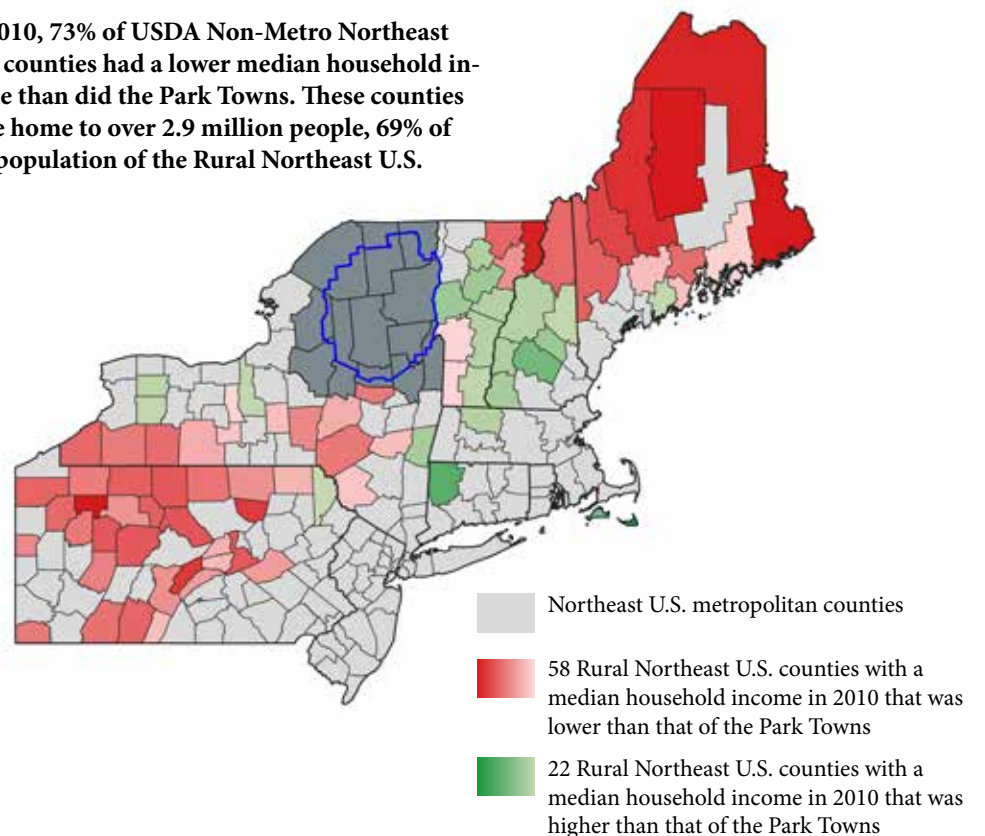
**Figure 14: Comparison of changes in median household income from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and the Rural Northeast U.S. counties**

From 1970 to 2010, 80% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had lower growth in median household income than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 3.4 million people, 80% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.



**Figure 15: Comparison of median household income in 2010 between the Park Towns and the Rural Northeast U.S. counties**

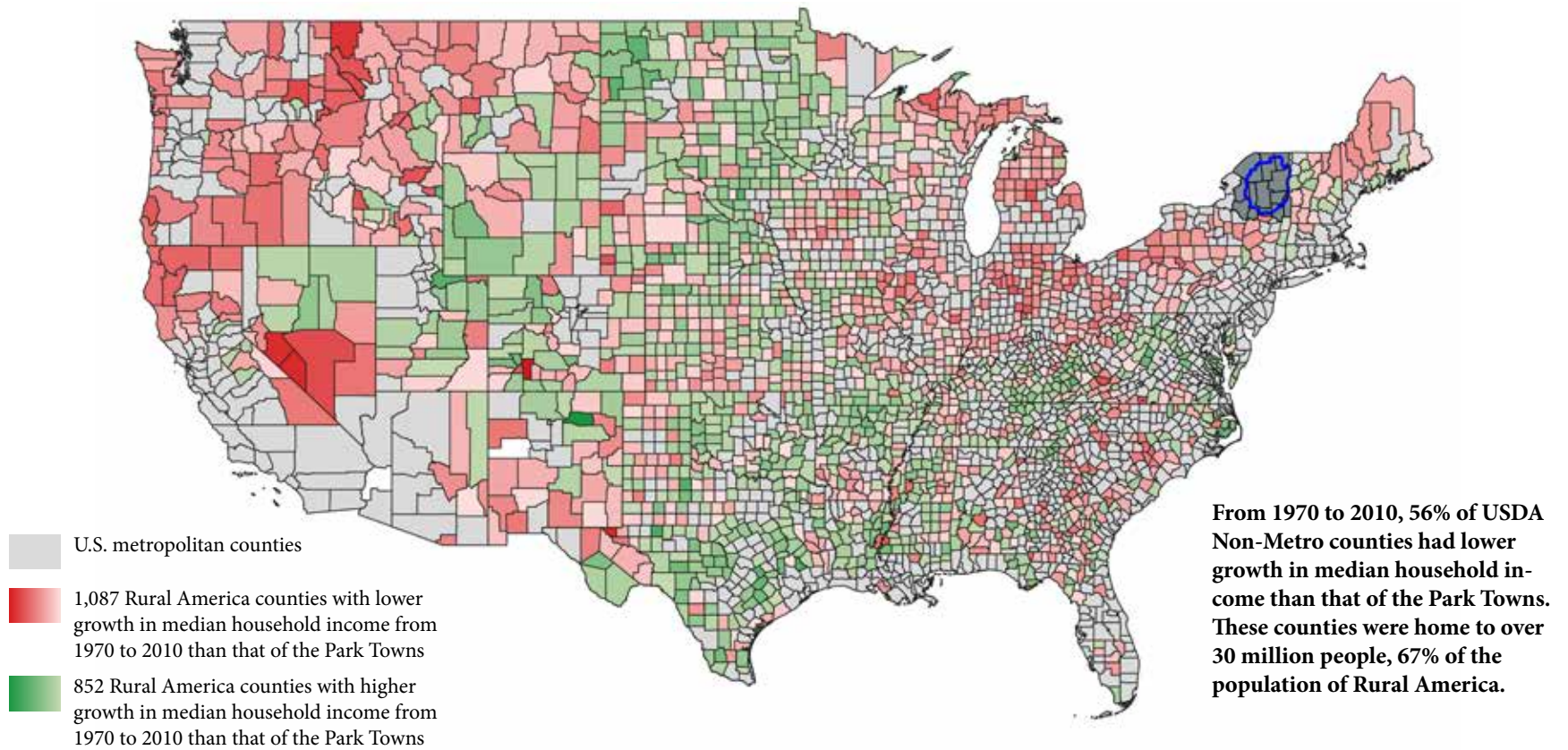
In 2010, 73% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had a lower median household income than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 2.9 million people, 69% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.



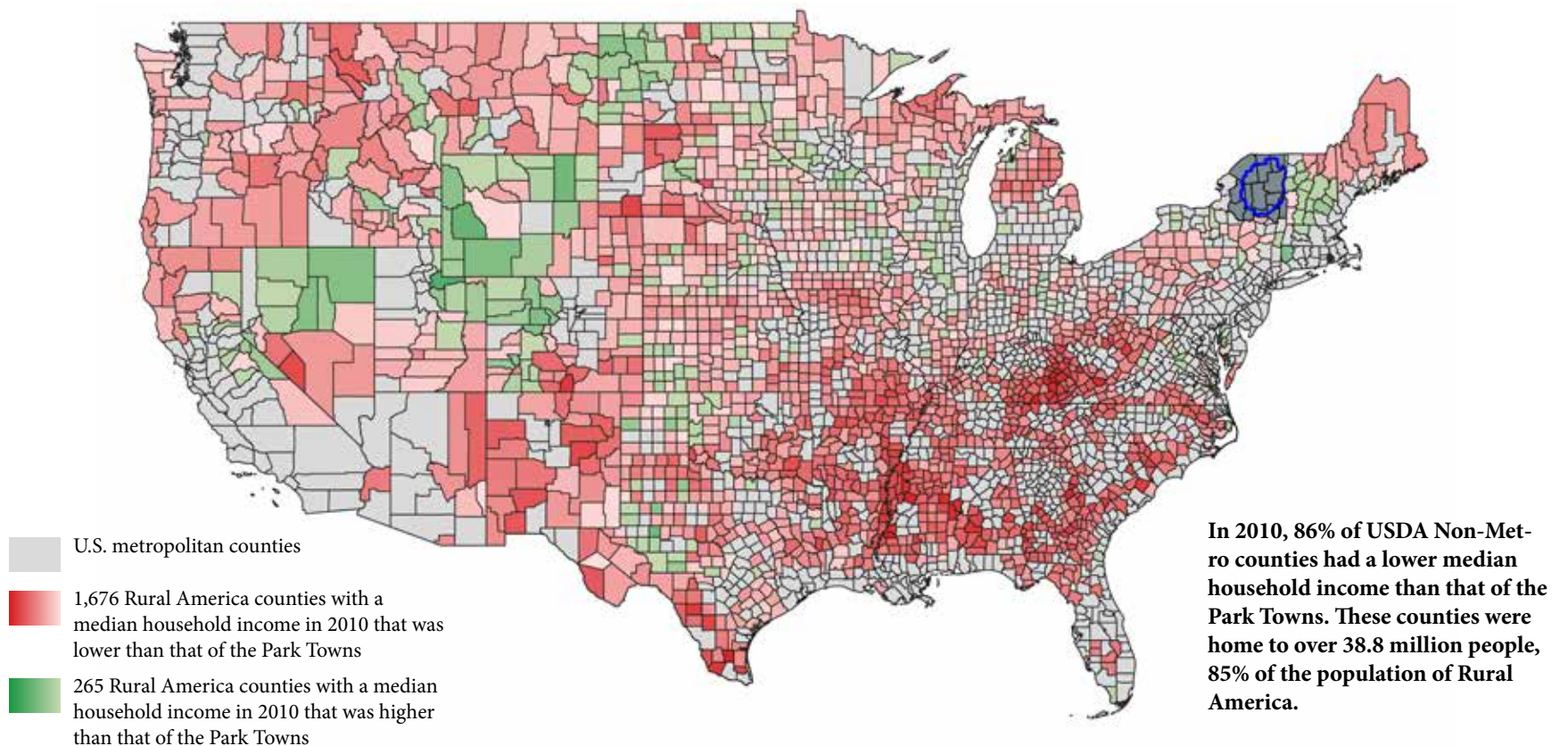


## Median Household Income Trends: Adirondack Park vs Rural America

**Figure 16: Comparison of changes in median household income from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and Rural America**



**Figure 17: Comparison of median household income in 2010 between the Park Towns and Rural America**





## Per Capita Income Trends: Adirondack Park vs New York State

### Key Findings

The Park Towns' increase in per capita income of 80.6% from 1970 to 2010 exceeded the New York State increase of 58.5% and the national increase of 57.9%.

The Park Towns' increase in per capita income from 1970 to 2010 exceeded that of 1,382 rural counties, home to 79% of the population of Rural America.

The Park Towns' per capita income in 2010 of \$26,248 exceeded the national level of \$23,300 and that of other rural areas, but lagged behind the New York State level of \$27,274.

The Park Towns' 2010 per capita income was higher than that of 1,656 rural counties, home to 87% of the residents of Rural America.

**Table 4: Change in Per Capita Income in New York and U.S., 1970–2010 (inflation adjusted)**

Area	1970	2010	Change
New York State	\$17,206	\$27,274	58.5%
Rural NY Towns	13,381	23,928	78.8%
Park Towns	14,537	26,248	80.6%
Split Towns	14,906	23,975	60.8%
United States	14,756	23,300	57.9%

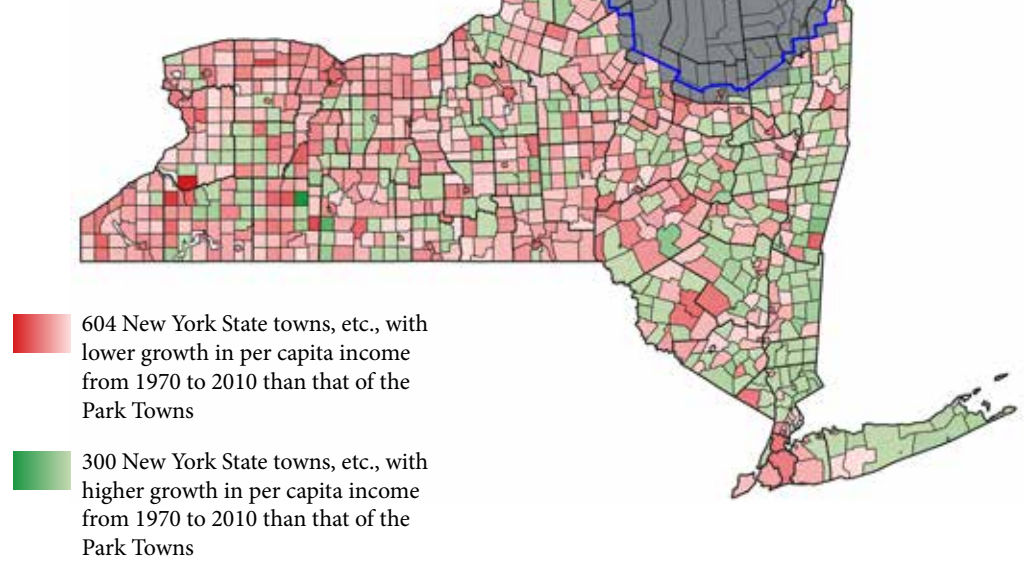
An analysis of per capita income trends is useful for evaluating differences between regions. When adjusted for inflation, per capita income is an important measurement, though not as good as median household income, because it is skewed by a few extremely high incomes. Per capita income rose across the U.S. from 1970 to 2010. Table 4 (above) shows that New York State rose by 58.5% and the U.S. rose by 57.9%.

The Park Towns' increase of 80.6% was similar to the growth of the Split Towns (60.8%) and the Rural New York towns (78.8%). All of these areas exceeded the state and national levels of growth. The maps on these two pages compare the growth in per capita income of the Park Towns with New York and the U.S. In both cases, from 1970 to

*continued on page 22*

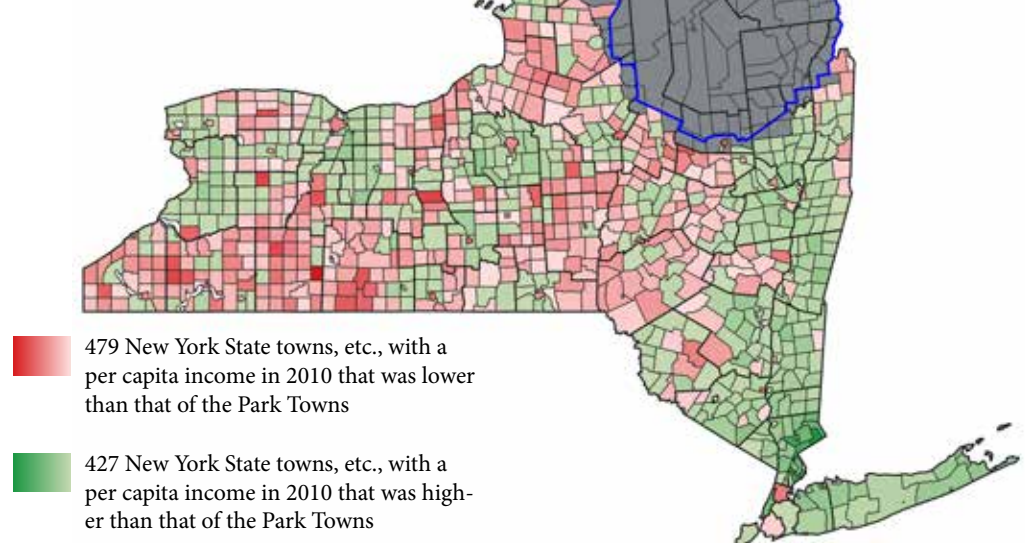
**Figure 18: Comparison of changes in per capita income from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and New York State towns, cities, and boroughs**

From 1970 to 2010, 67% of the towns, etc., in New York State had lower growth in per capita income than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 14.5 million people, 76% of New York State's population.



**Figure 19: Comparison of per capita income in 2010 between the Park Towns and New York State towns, cities, and boroughs**

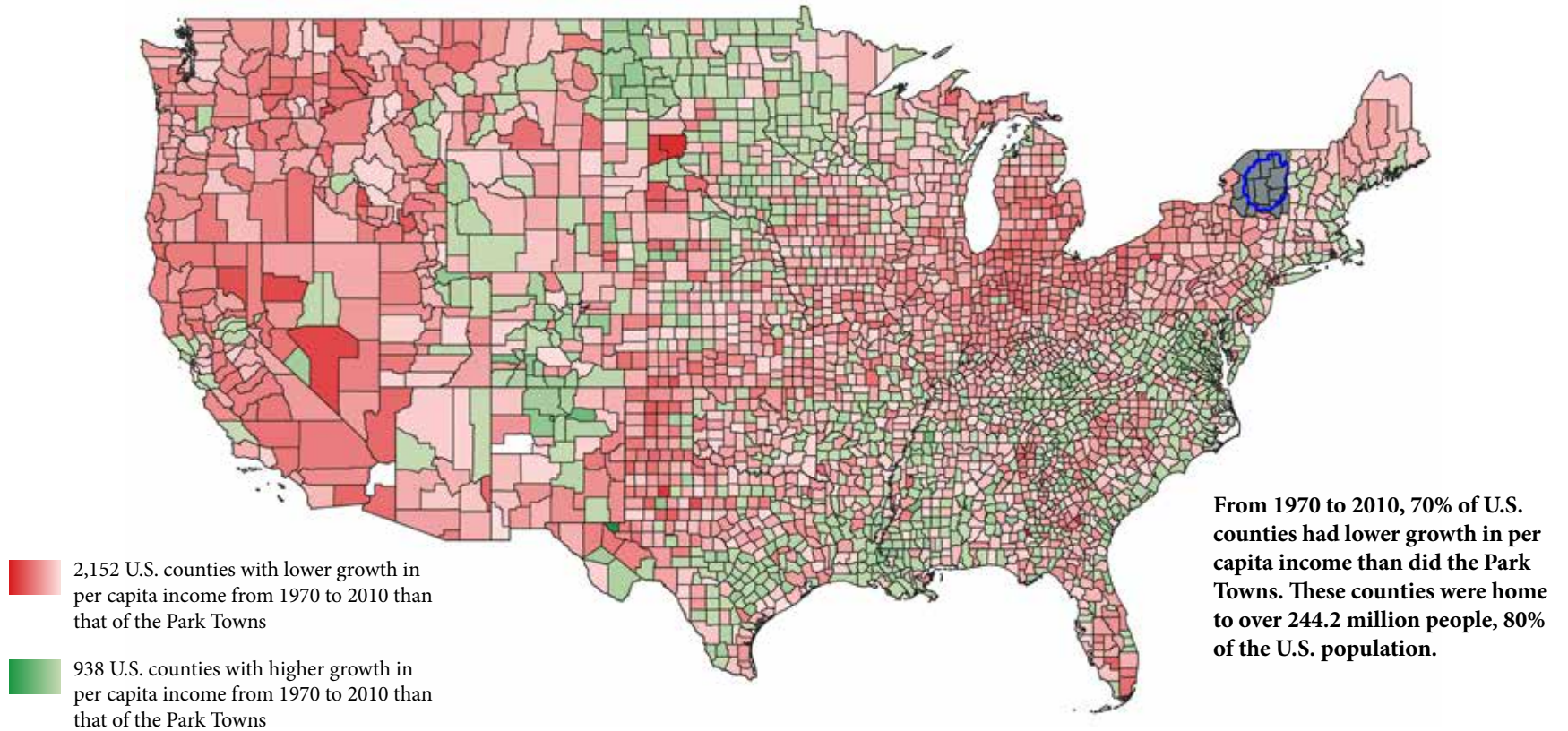
In 2010, 53% of towns, etc., in New York State had a lower per capita income than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 7.1 million people, 37% of New York State's population.



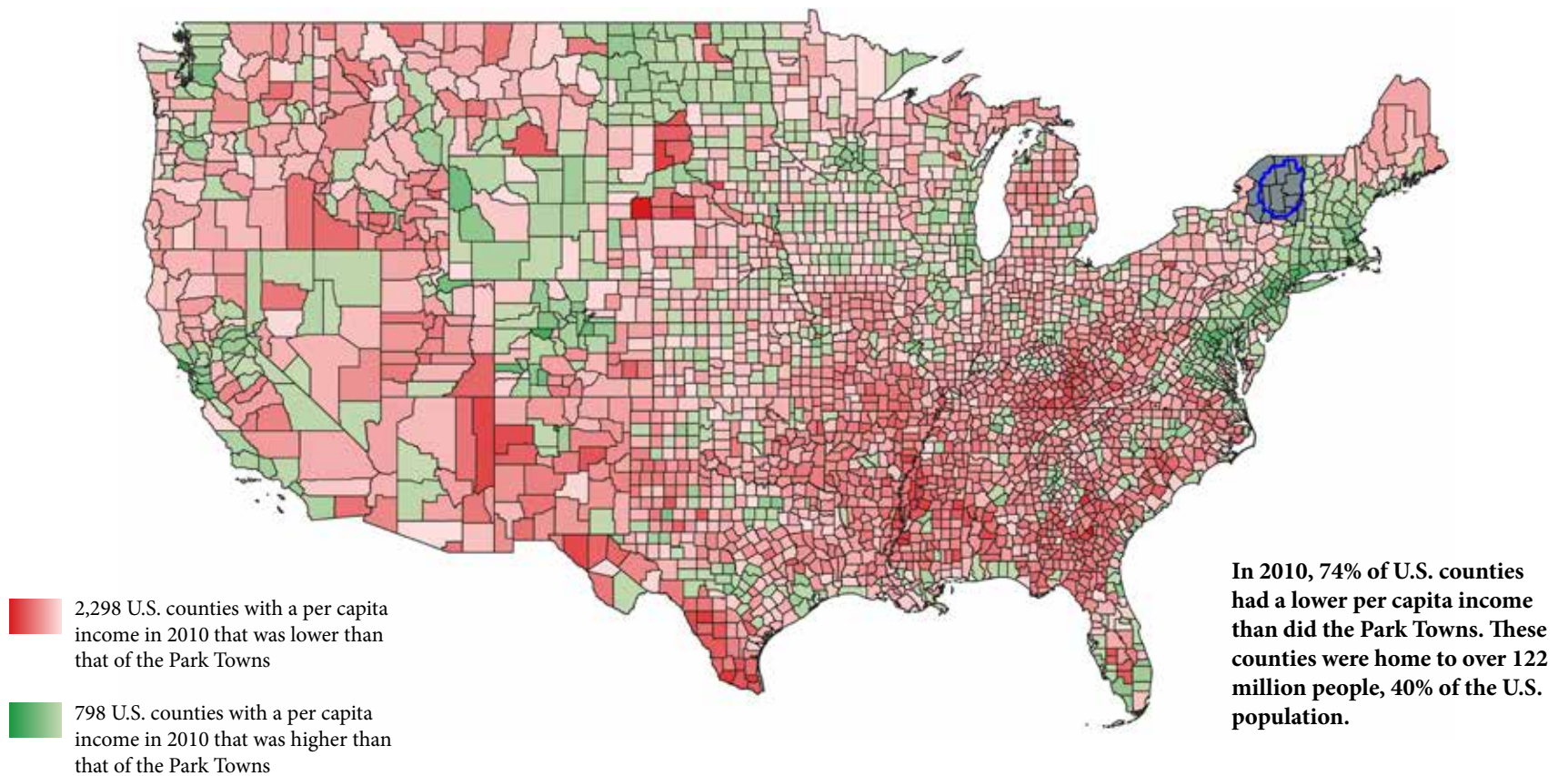


## Per Capita Income Trends: Adirondack Park vs the United States

**Figure 20: Comparison of changes in per capita income from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and U.S. counties**



**Figure 21: Comparison of per capita income in 2010 between the Park Towns and U.S. counties**





## Per Capita Income Trends: Adirondack Park vs Rural Northeast U.S.

*continued from page 20*

2010, the Park Towns saw a rate of growth higher than that of areas of New York State with 76% of the state's population, and higher than that of areas of the U.S. with 80% of the population.

In 2010, the Park Towns had a per capita income of \$26,248, which was higher than all other rural areas. Table 5 below shows that the Park Towns experienced both a higher rate of growth in per capita income from 1970 to 2010 and had a higher per capita income in 2010 than did other rural areas.

**Table 5: Change in Per Capita Income in Rural America, 1970–2010 (inflation adjusted)**

Area	1970	2010	Change
<b>Park Towns</b>	<b>\$14,537</b>	<b>\$26,248</b>	<b>80.6%</b>
<b>Rural America</b>			
USDA Non-Metro U.S.	13,905	21,717	56.2%
Low Density U.S.	13,765	22,049	60.2%
USDA Non-Metro NE	16,053	24,493	52.6%
Low Density NE	15,033	21,859	45.4%

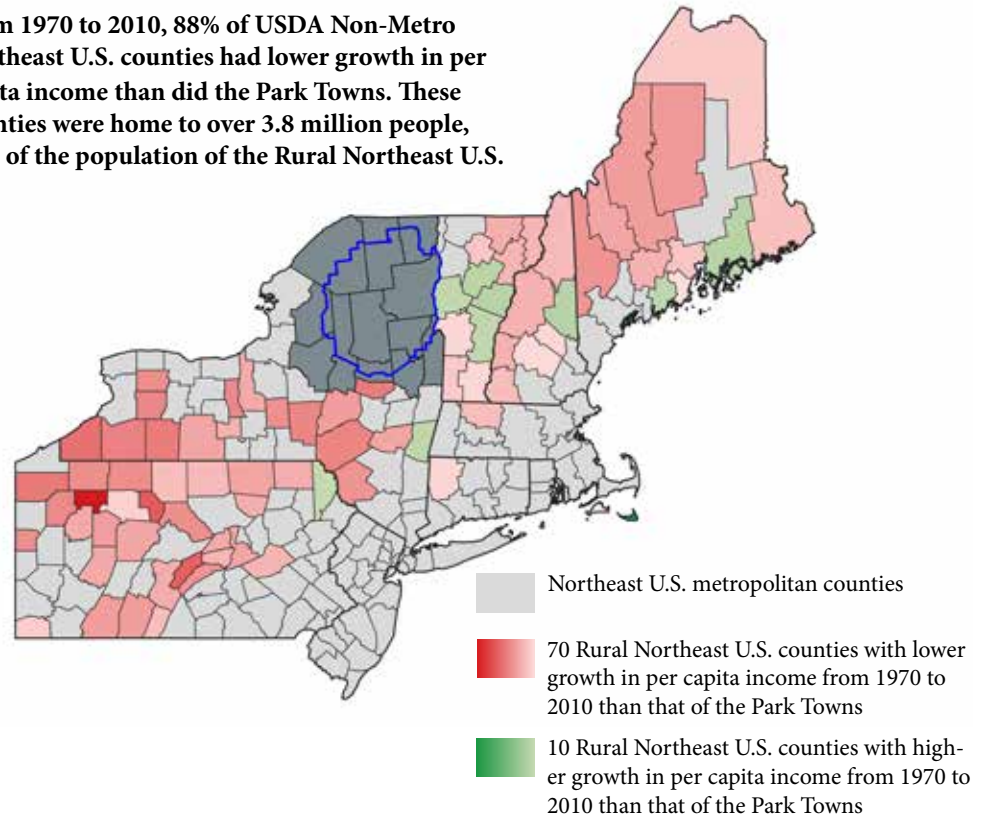
The maps on these pages (Figures 22–25) show comparisons between the Park Towns and the Rural Northeast U.S. and Rural America. The Park Towns saw a rate of growth in per capita income from 1970 to 2010 that was higher than that of areas with the majority of the population of Rural America. In 2010, the per capita income of the Park Towns was higher than that of areas with 70% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S. and 87% of the Rural America.

Over the last 40 years, the Park Towns experienced growth in per capita income that was greater than that of the majority of New York State, the U.S. and Rural America. In 2010, the Park Towns had a per capita income that was higher than that of most other rural areas.

Per capita income is one economic indicator among many that should be evaluated to understand the economic performance of a region. The rising level of per capita income in the Park Towns is consistent with median household income trends. □

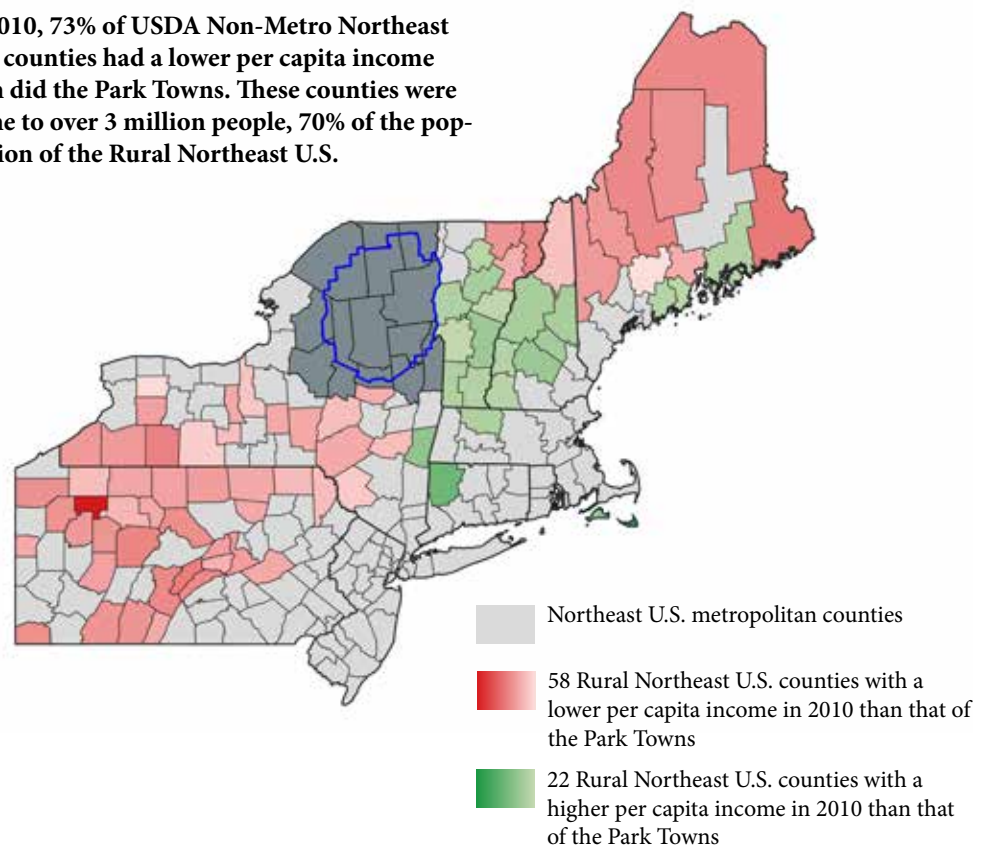
**Figure 22: Comparison of changes in per capita income from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and the Rural Northeast U.S. counties**

From 1970 to 2010, 88% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had lower growth in per capita income than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 3.8 million people, 90% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.



**Figure 23: Comparison of per capita income in 2010 between the Park Towns and the Rural Northeast U.S. counties**

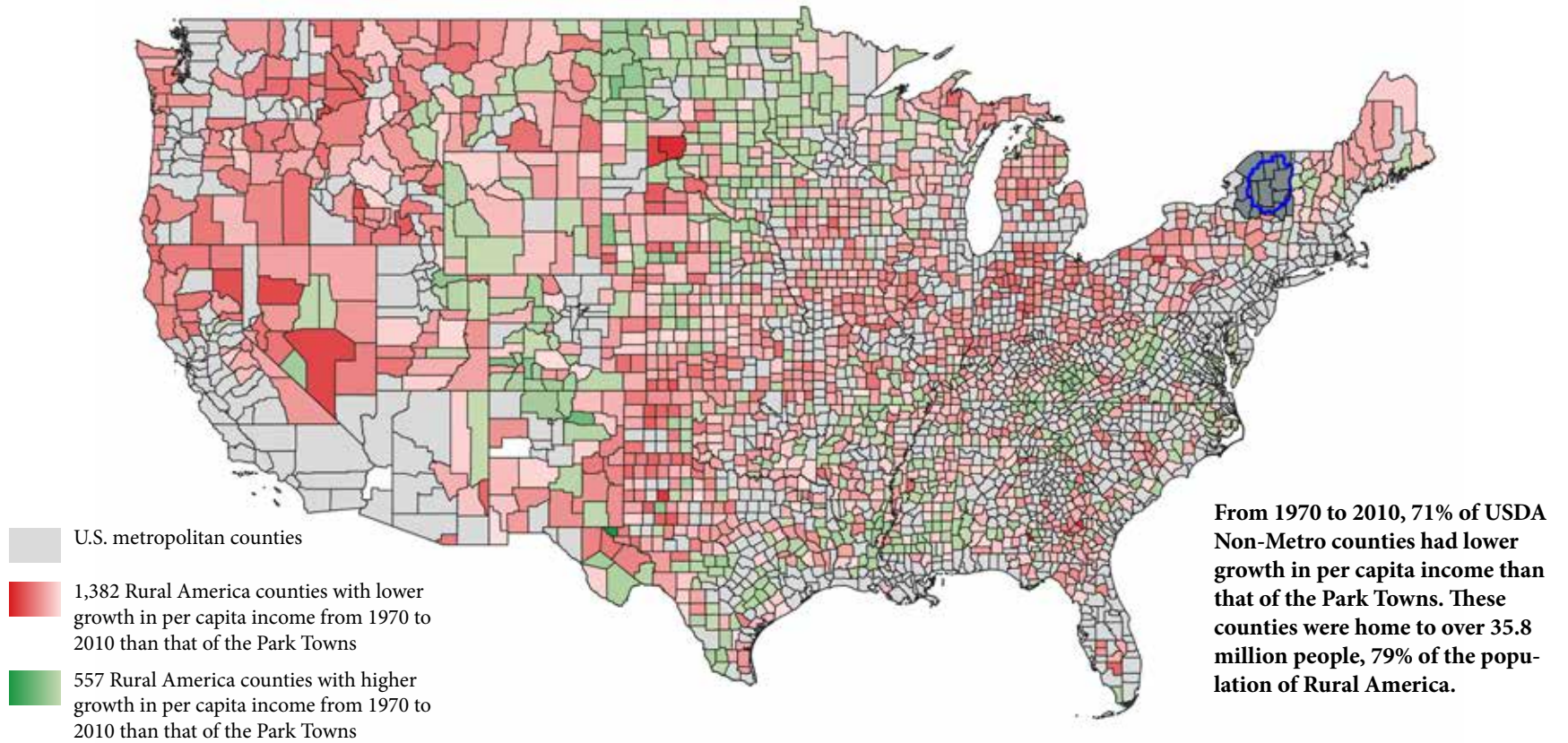
In 2010, 73% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had a lower per capita income than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 3 million people, 70% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.



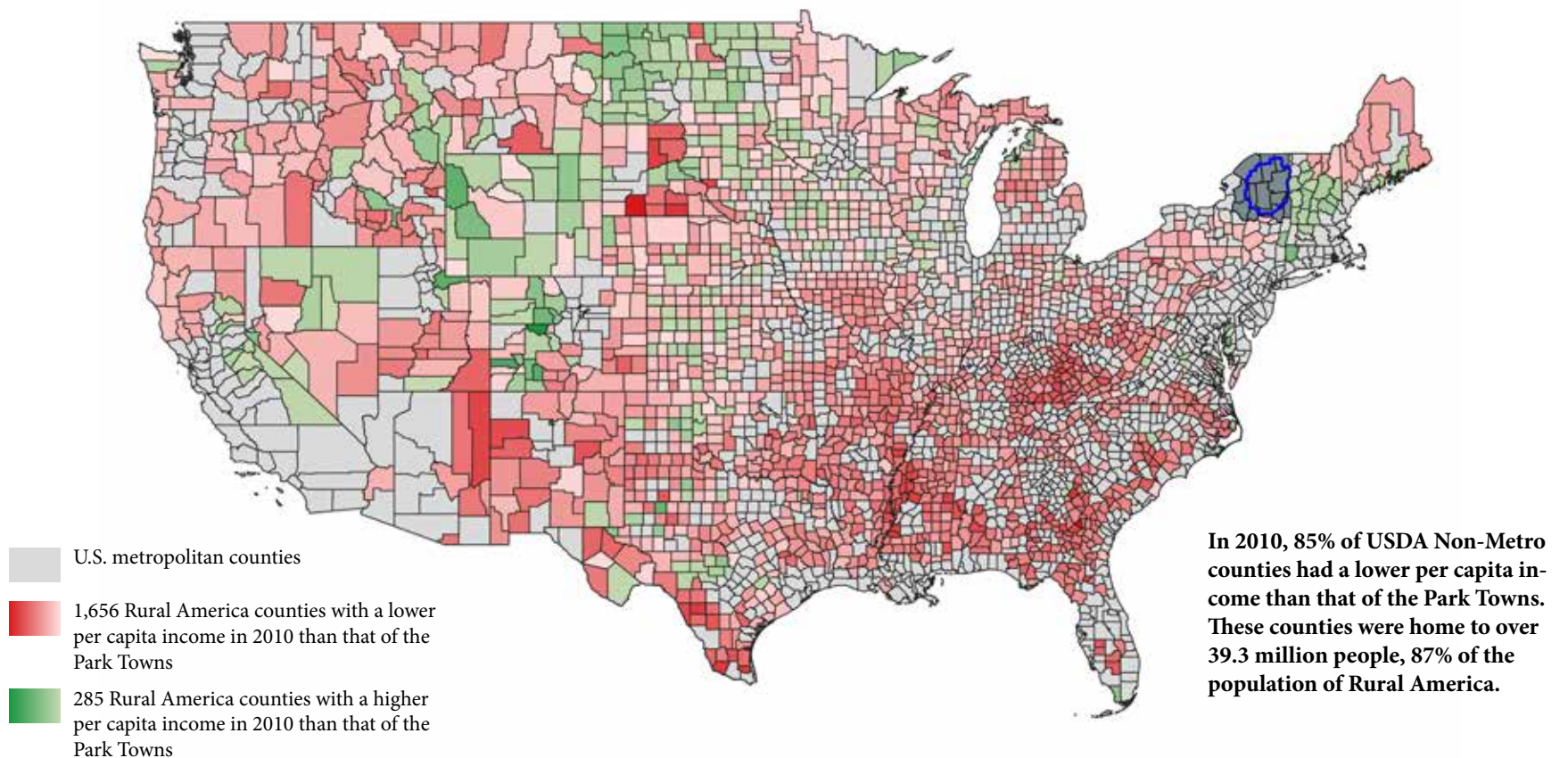


## Per Capita Income Trends: Adirondack Park vs Rural America

**Figure 24: Comparison of changes in per capita income from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and Rural America**



**Figure 25: Comparison of per capita income in 2010 between the Park Towns and Rural America**





## Poverty Rate Trends: Adirondack Park vs New York State

### Key Findings

From 1970 to 2010, the poverty rate of the Park Towns increased by 1.6 percentage points. This was less than the New York State increase of 6.9 percentage points and the U.S. increase of 4.5 percentage points.

The Park Towns' 1.6 percentage point increase in its poverty rate from 1970 to 2010 was lower than that of 76% of the Rural Northeast U.S. counties.

The Park Towns' 2010 poverty rate was lower than that of 2,261 U.S. counties, home to 69% of the U.S. population.

The Park Towns' 2010 poverty rate was lower than that of 1,522 rural counties, home to 83% of the population of Rural America.

**Table 6: Change in the Poverty Rate in New York and U.S., 1970–2010**

Area	1970	2010	Change
New York State	8.0%	14.9%	6.9 points
Rural NY Towns	10.4	12.4	2.0
Park Towns	10.5	12.1	1.6
Split Towns	9.5	11.7	2.2
United States	10.4	14.9	4.5

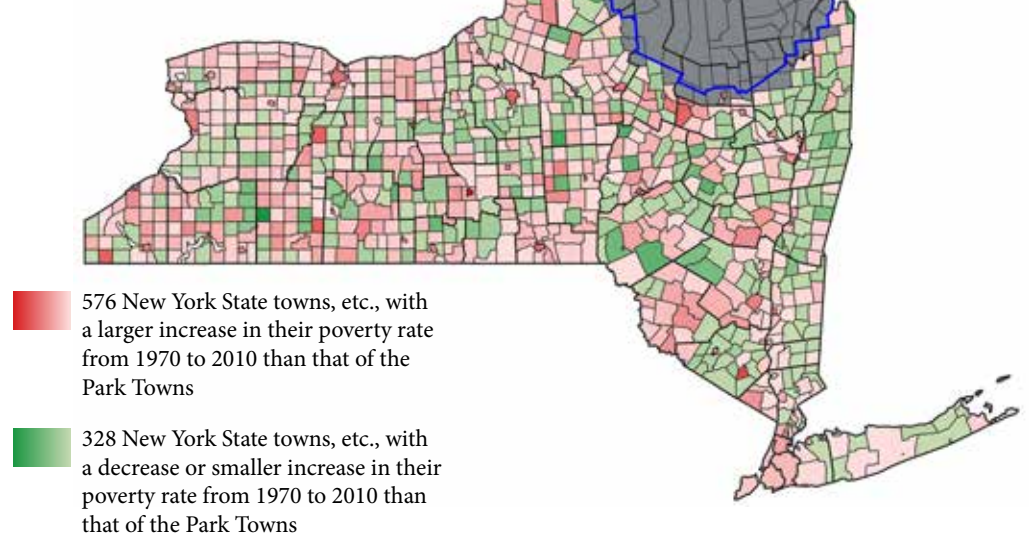
In 2010, a family of four with an annual income of \$22,050 or less was considered to be living in poverty. The poverty rate of a region is a key indicator of overall economic health. Over this 40-year time frame, the overall poverty rate rose significantly in New York State from 8.0% to 14.9%. Across the U.S., the poverty rate rose from 10.4% to 14.9%.

In general, rural areas in New York State and the U.S. did not experience overall poverty rate increases commensurate with those of New York and the U.S. The Park Towns saw an increase of 1.6 percentage points and the Split Towns saw an increase of 2.2 percentage points. The 47 Rural New York towns experienced an increase of 2.0 percentage points.

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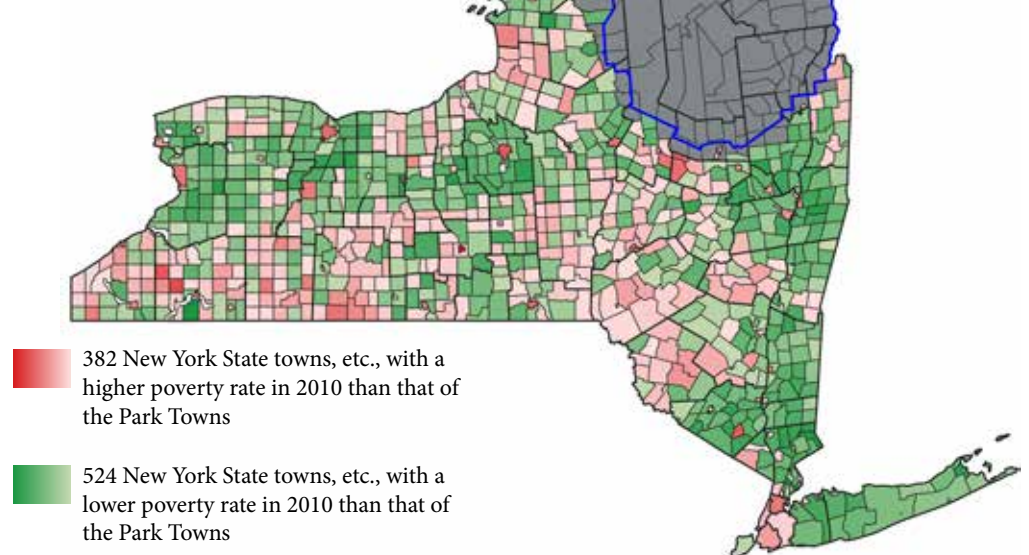
**Figure 26: Comparison of changes in the poverty rate from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and New York State towns, cities, and boroughs**

From 1970 to 2010, 64% of the towns, etc., in New York State had a larger increase in their poverty rate than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 16.6 million people, 87% of New York State's population.



**Figure 27: Comparison of the poverty rate in 2010 between the Park Towns and New York State towns, cities, and boroughs**

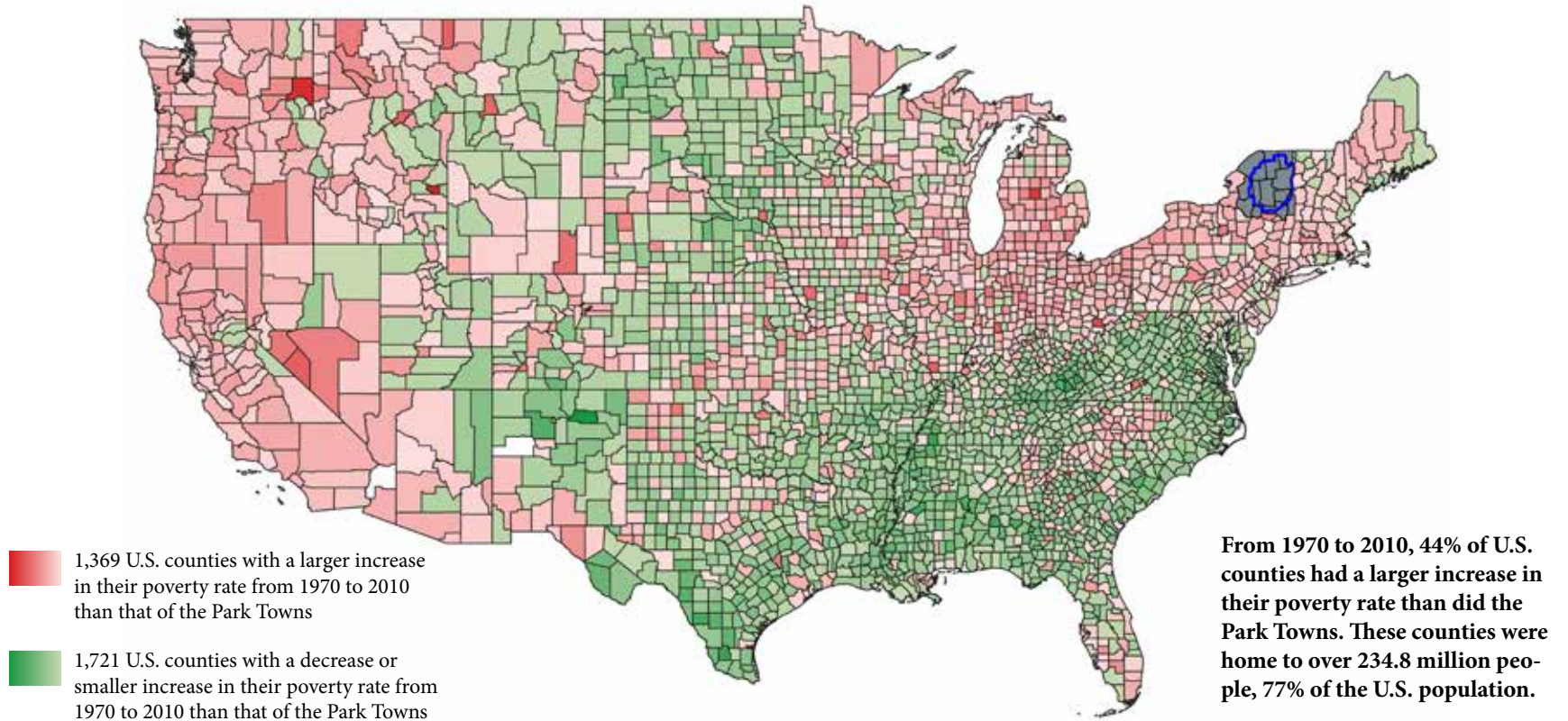
In 2010, 42% of towns, etc., in New York State had a higher poverty rate than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 11 million people, 58% of New York State's population.



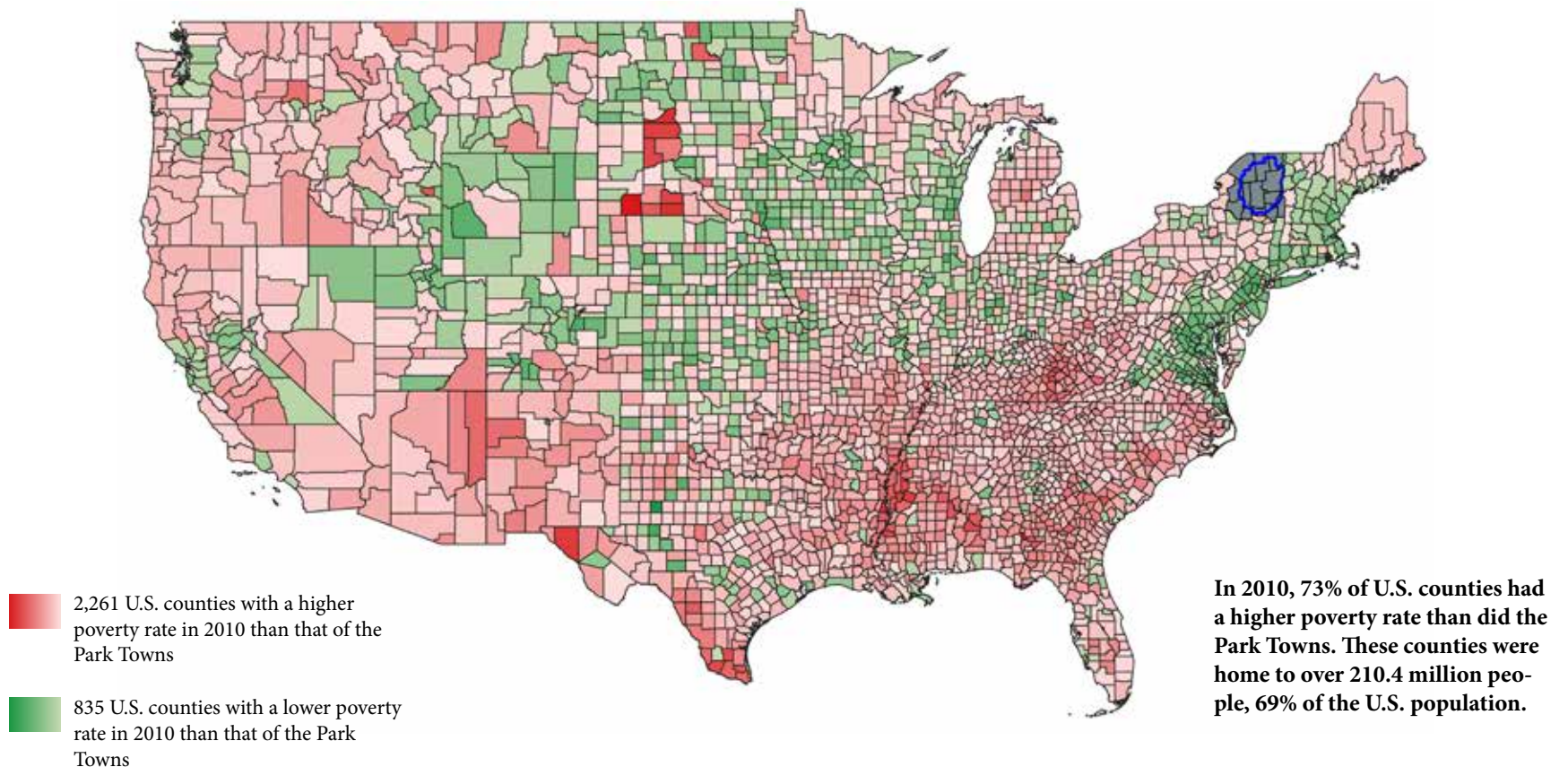


## Poverty Rate Trends: Adirondack Park vs the United States

**Figure 28: Comparison of changes in the poverty rate from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and U.S. counties**



**Figure 29: Comparison of the poverty rate in 2010 between the Park Towns and U.S. counties**





## Poverty Rate Trends: Adirondack Park vs Rural Northeast U.S.

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Figures on pages 24–25 show changes in the poverty rate in New York State and the U.S. Areas with the majority of the state and national populations saw growth in their poverty rates higher than those of the Park Towns. Vast areas also had poverty rates in 2010 that were significantly higher than those of the 62 Adirondack Park Towns.

Table 7 (below) shows that rural U.S. counties saw either a slight gain or a slight drop in their poverty rates. These regions also started in 1970 with poverty rates that were significantly higher than those of the Park Towns. The nearby rural areas in the Northeast U.S. saw growth in poverty rates similar to or greater than those of the Park Towns.

**Table 7: Change in the Poverty Rate in Rural America, 1970–2010**

Area	1970	2010	Change
<b>Park Towns</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	<b>12.1%</b>	<b>1.6 points</b>
<b>Rural America</b>			
USDA Non-Metro U.S.	17.2	17.7	0.5
Low Density U.S.	18.9	17.2	-1.7
USDA Non-Metro NE	8.8	13.3	4.5
Low Density NE	12.6	15.4	2.8

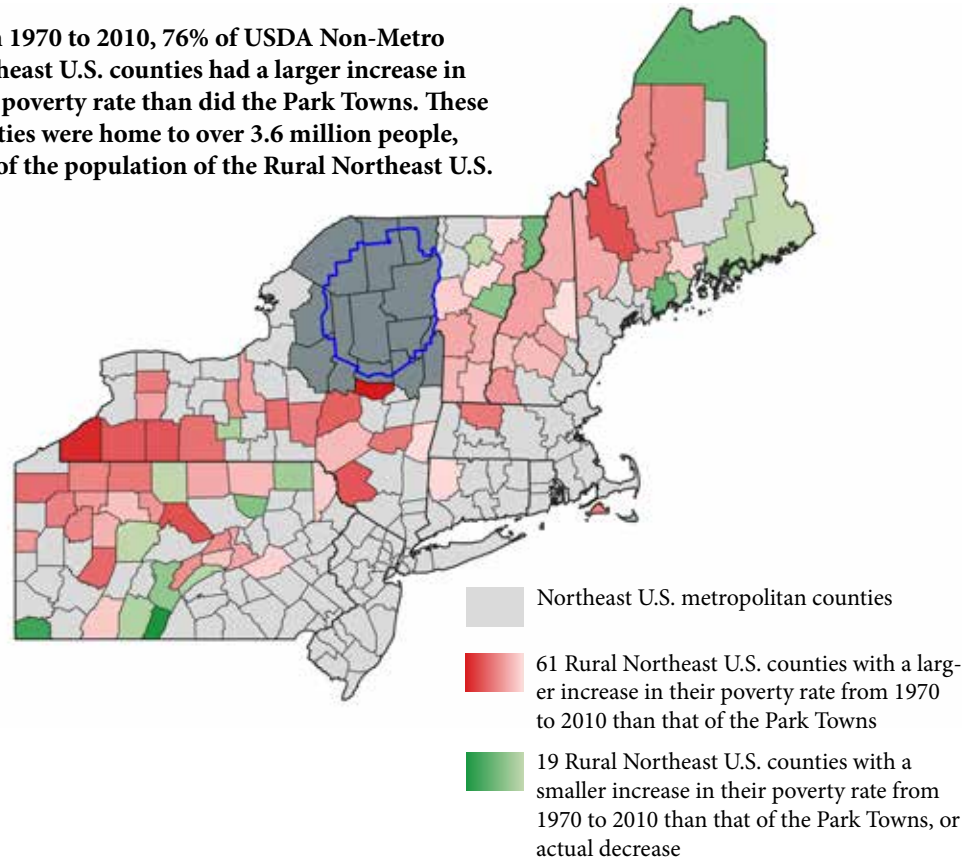
The maps on these two pages show that the majority of the residents of the Rural Northeast U.S. and Rural America lived in places that saw a growth in their poverty rates higher than those of the Park Towns from 1970 to 2010 or had higher poverty rates in 2010. In all cases, the 2010 poverty rates for rural areas across the U.S. exceeded the Park Towns' rate of 12.1%.

The increase in the overall poverty rate in the Park Towns to 12.1% is a worrisome trend. The high poverty rate in many areas of the U.S. and New York is one of the cruelest realities of modern American life. This is an important indicator that bears close watching in the years ahead.

From 1970 to 2010, the Park Towns' poverty rate increased at a lower rate than that of the majority of New York State, the U.S. and Rural America. In 2010, the poverty rate in the Park Towns was lower than that of the majority of New York State, the U.S. and Rural America. □

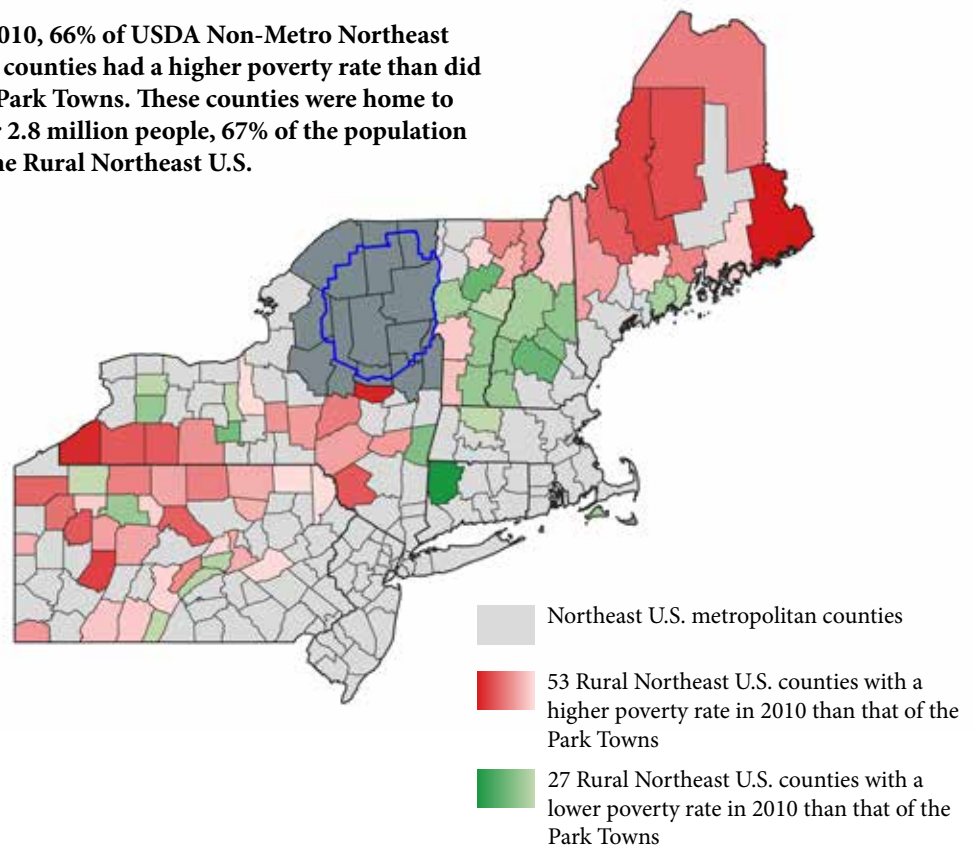
**Figure 30: Comparison of changes in the poverty rate from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and the Rural Northeast U.S. counties**

From 1970 to 2010, 76% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had a larger increase in their poverty rate than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 3.6 million people, 85% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.



**Figure 31: Comparison of the poverty rate in 2010 between the Park Towns and the Rural Northeast U.S. counties**

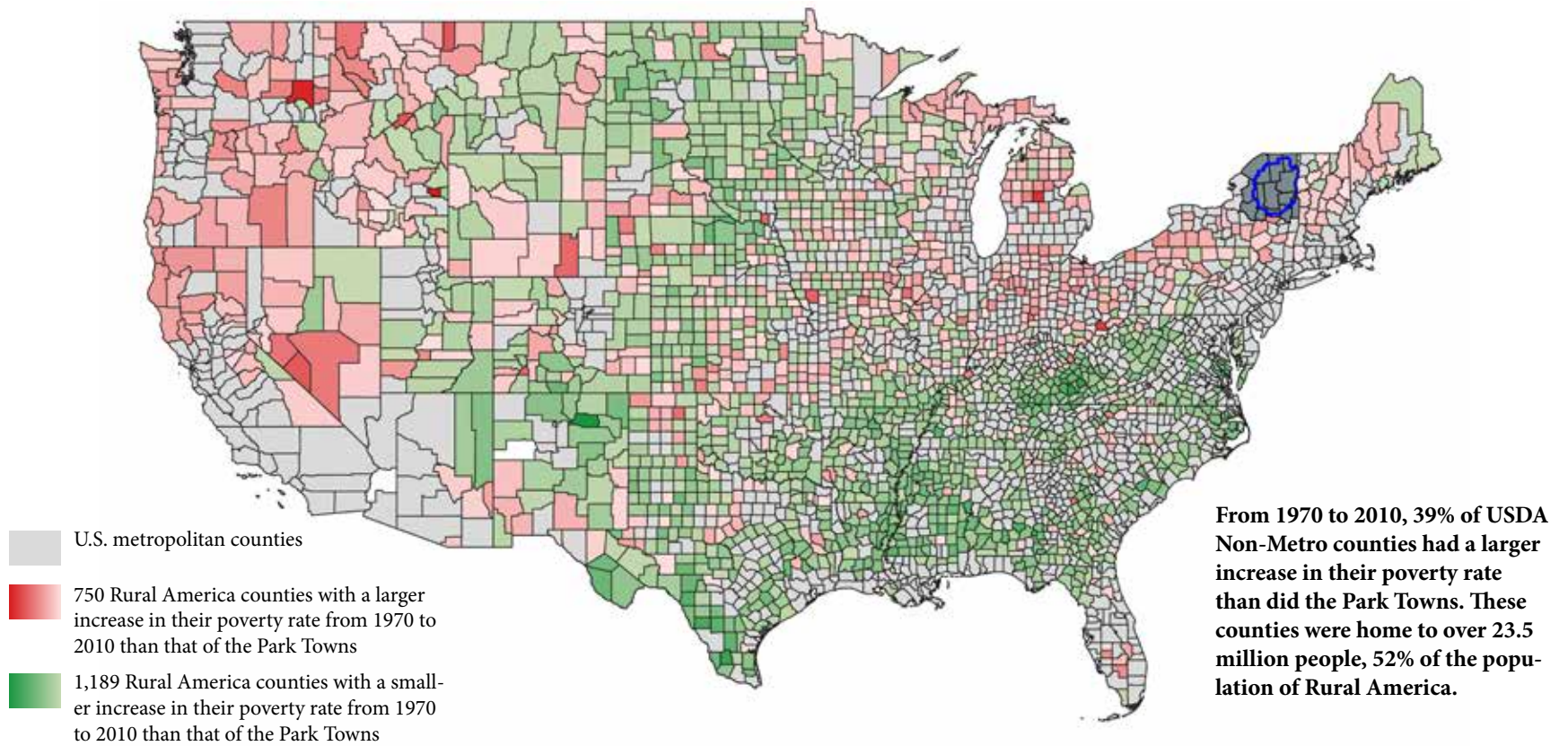
In 2010, 66% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had a higher poverty rate than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 2.8 million people, 67% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.



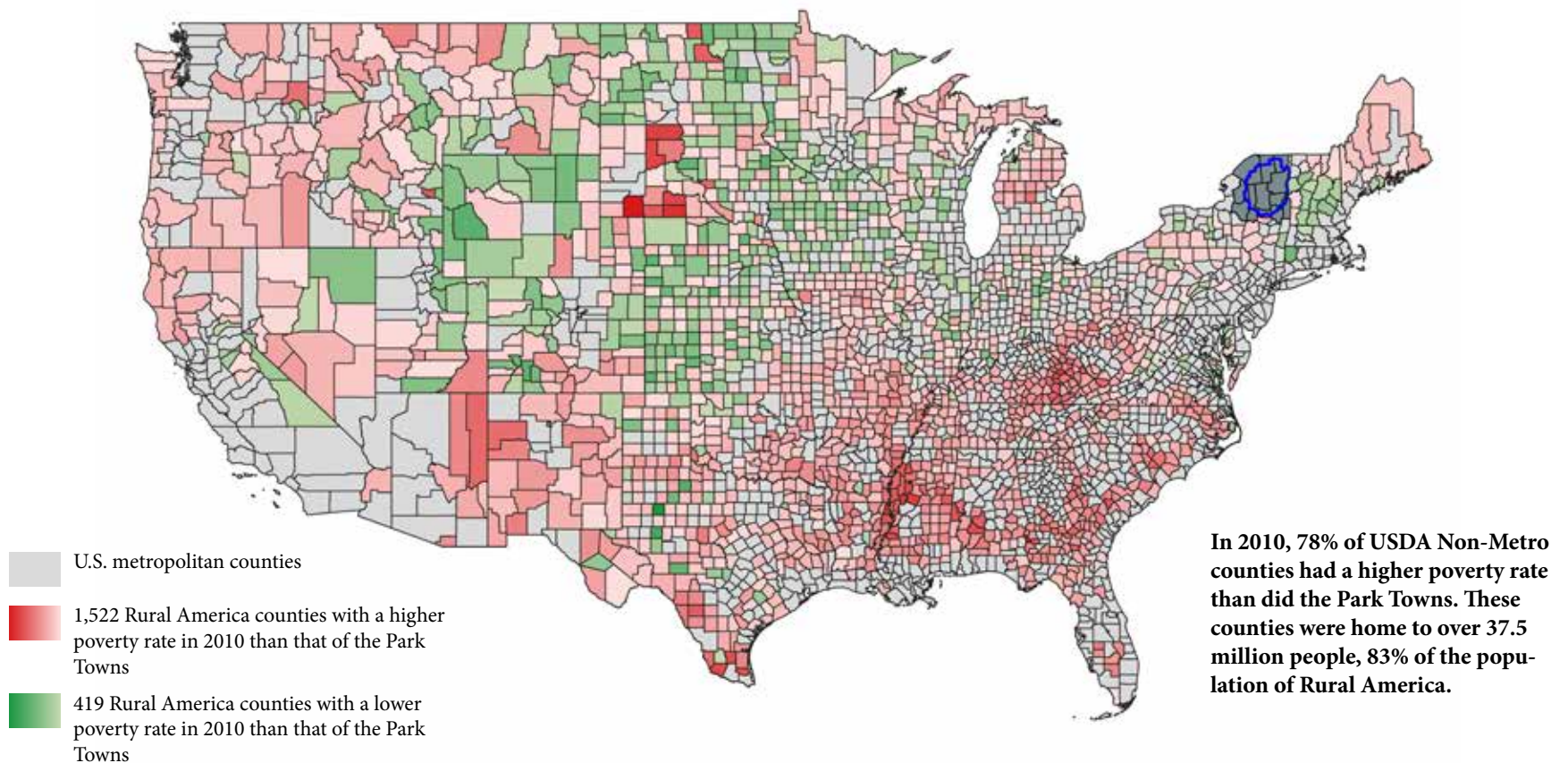


## Poverty Rate Trends: Adirondack Park vs Rural America

**Figure 32: Comparison of changes in the poverty rate from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and Rural America**



**Figure 33: Comparison of the poverty rate in 2010 between the Park Towns and Rural America**





## Employment Rate Trends: Adirondack Park vs New York State

### Key Findings

The increase in the Park Towns' employment rate for people 16 years of age or older from 1970 to 2010 was greater than the increases of New York State and the U.S.

The Park Towns' 2010 employment rate of 53.8% lagged behind New York State's rate of 57.7% and the U.S. rate of 57.6%.

The Park Towns' 12.6% growth in its employment rate from 1970 to 2010 was higher than that of 1,272 rural counties, home to 74% of the population of Rural America.

The Park Towns' 2010 employment rate of 53.8% was higher than that of 1,043 rural counties, home to 58% of the population of Rural America.

**Table 8: Change in the Employment Rate, of People 16 Years and Older, in New York and U.S., 1970–2010**

Area	1970	2010	Change
New York State	54.8%	57.7%	5.3%
Rural NY Towns	52.1	53.6	2.8%
Park Towns	47.8	53.8	12.6%
Split Towns	47.7	55.2	15.7%
United States	54.3	57.6	6.1%

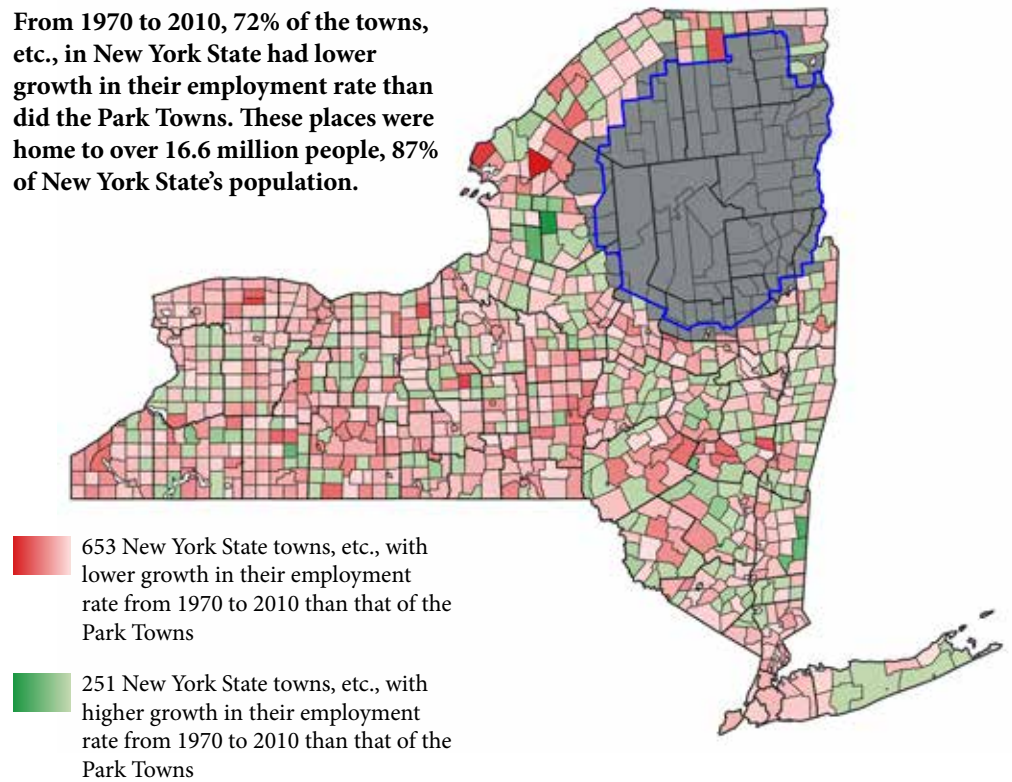
Employment as a percent of the total population 16 years and older is one of the best indicators for assessing the economic vitality of a region because it shows the number of residents who are actively working and employed. From 1970 to 2010, the Park Towns and Split Towns experienced the greatest improvements in their employment rates as compared with all other regions. The Park Towns saw an increase of 12.6% and the Split Towns grew by 15.7% compared with the growth in New York State of 5.3% and the U.S. increase in of 6.1%.

In 1970, the Park Towns lagged behind New York State and U.S. employment rates. In 1970, the

*continued on page 30*

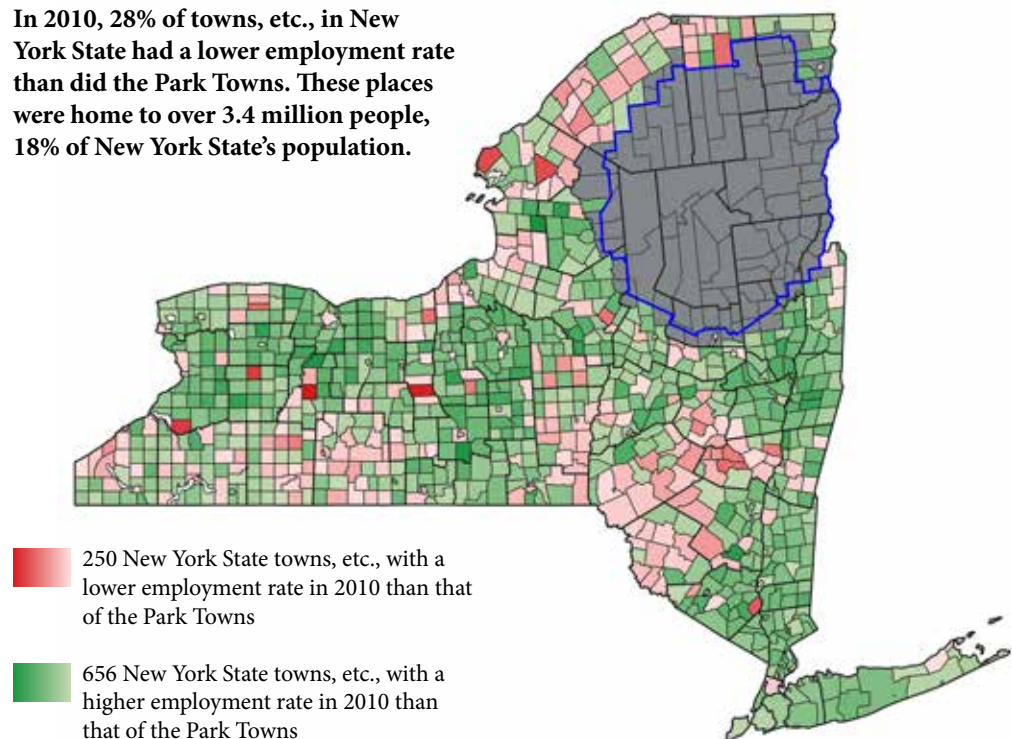
**Figure 34: Comparison of changes in the employment rate, of people 16 years and older, from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and New York State towns, cities, and boroughs**

From 1970 to 2010, 72% of the towns, etc., in New York State had lower growth in their employment rate than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 16.6 million people, 87% of New York State's population.



**Figure 35: Comparison of the employment rate, of people 16 years and older, in 2010 between the Park Towns and New York State towns, cities, and boroughs**

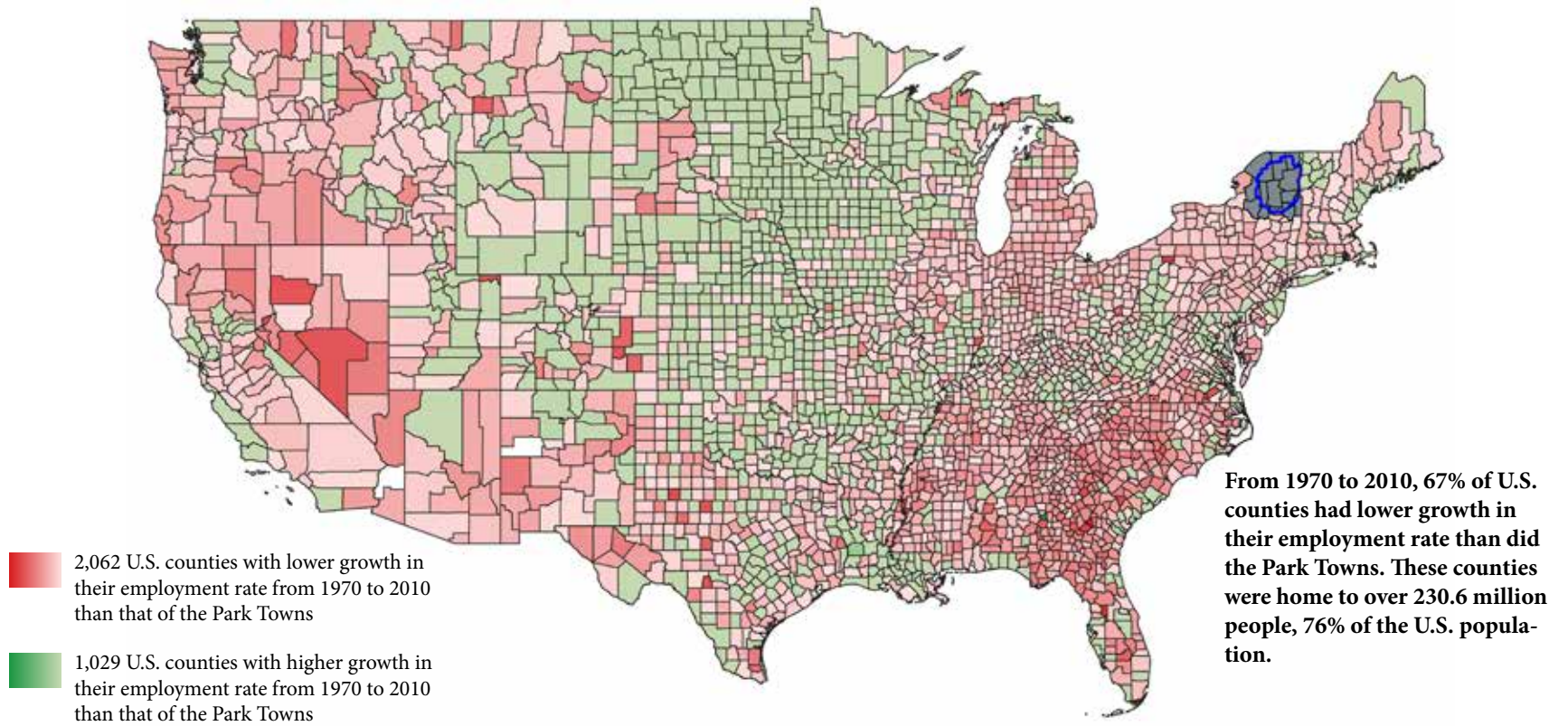
In 2010, 28% of towns, etc., in New York State had a lower employment rate than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 3.4 million people, 18% of New York State's population.



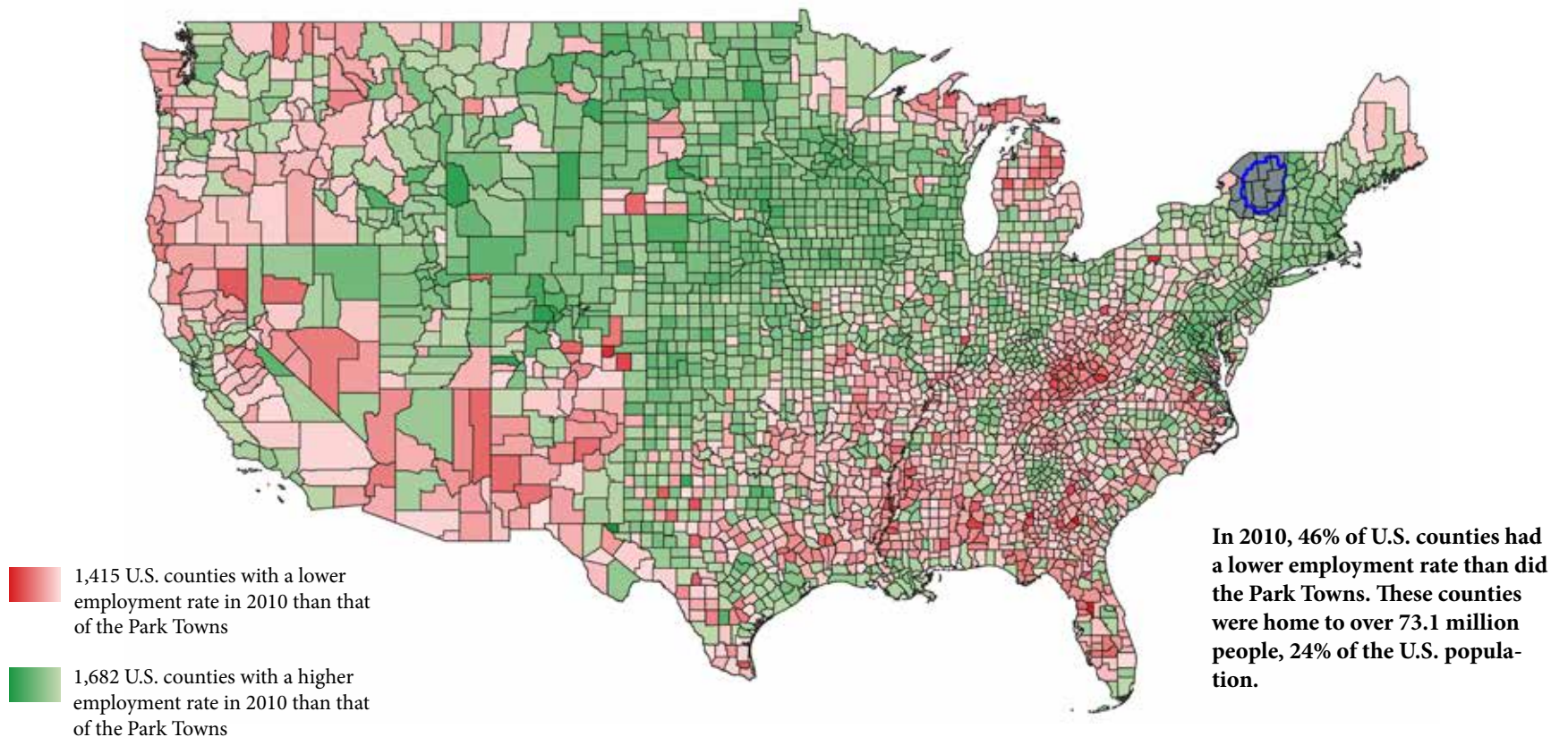


## Employment Rate Trends: Adirondack Park vs the United States

**Figure 36: Comparison of changes in the employment rate, of people 16 years and older, from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and U.S. counties**



**Figure 37: Comparison of the employment rate, of people 16 years and older, in 2010 between the Park Towns and U.S. counties**





## Employment Rate Trends: Adirondack Park vs Rural Northeast U.S.

*continued from page 28*

Park Towns saw 47.8% of the population 16 years or older employed, compared with over 54.8% across New York State and 54.3% in the U.S. By 2010, this gap had narrowed to 53.8% for the Park Towns compared with 57.7% for New York State and 57.6% for the U.S. See Table 8 on page 28.

While the Park Towns saw growth in its employment rate from 1970 to 2010 that was higher than that of New York and the U.S., its 2010 employment rate was lower than that of these areas. The maps on pages 28 and 29 show how the Park Towns compared with New York and the U.S.

**Table 9: Change in the Employment Rate, of people 16 Years and Older, in Rural America, 1970–2010**

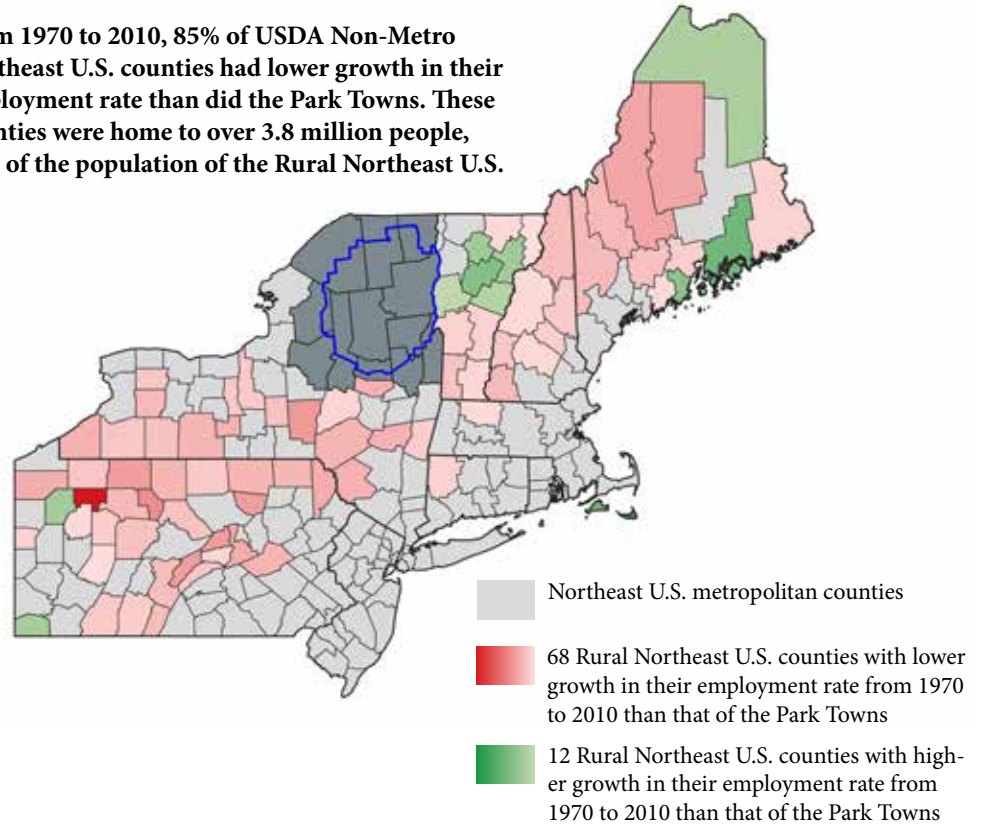
Area	1970	2010	Change
Park Towns	47.8%	53.8%	12.6%
<b>Rural America</b>			
USDA Non-Metro U.S.	50.4	52.6	4.2%
Low Density U.S.	49.2	53.1	8.0%
USDA Non-Metro NE	52.7	55.9	6.1%
Low Density NE	50.4	53.0	5.3%

Whereas the Park Towns' employment rate lagged behind that of New York and the U.S., they were consistent with vast areas of Rural America. Table 9 (above) shows that the Park Towns' 12.6% growth in its overall employment rate was higher than that of other rural areas from 1970 to 2010. The Park Towns' 2010 employment rate of 53.8% for residents over age 16 was consistent with that of other rural areas. The maps on these two pages compare the employment trends between the Park Towns and Rural America.

The upward trend of the employment rate of the population 16 years and older is positive for rural areas. A big question is whether these trends are sustained in the decade that follows 2010. In 1970, the Park Towns lagged behind the employment rates of New York, the U.S. and most other rural areas, but by 2010 had largely closed the gap. In 2010, the Park Towns had a higher employment rate than that of the majority of Rural America. □

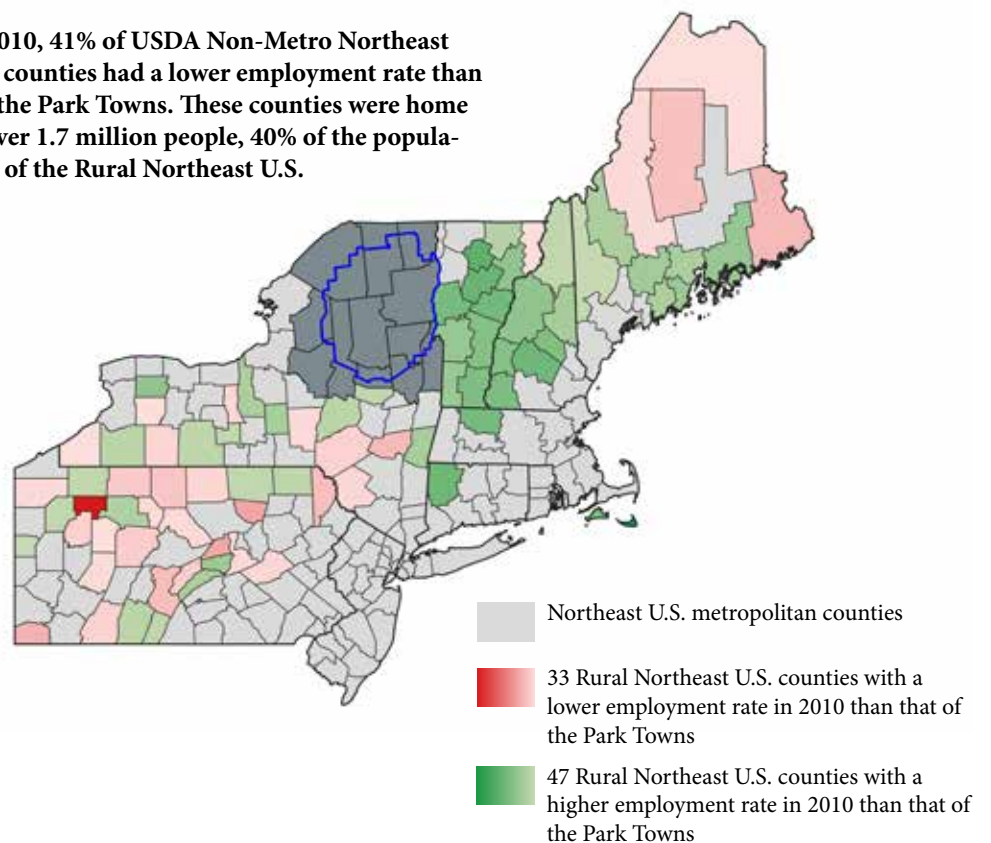
**Figure 38: Comparison of changes in the employment rate, of people 16 years and older, from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and the Rural Northeast U.S. counties**

From 1970 to 2010, 85% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had lower growth in their employment rate than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 3.8 million people, 89% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.



**Figure 39: Comparison of the employment rate, of people 16 years and older, in 2010 between the Park Towns and the Rural Northeast U.S. counties**

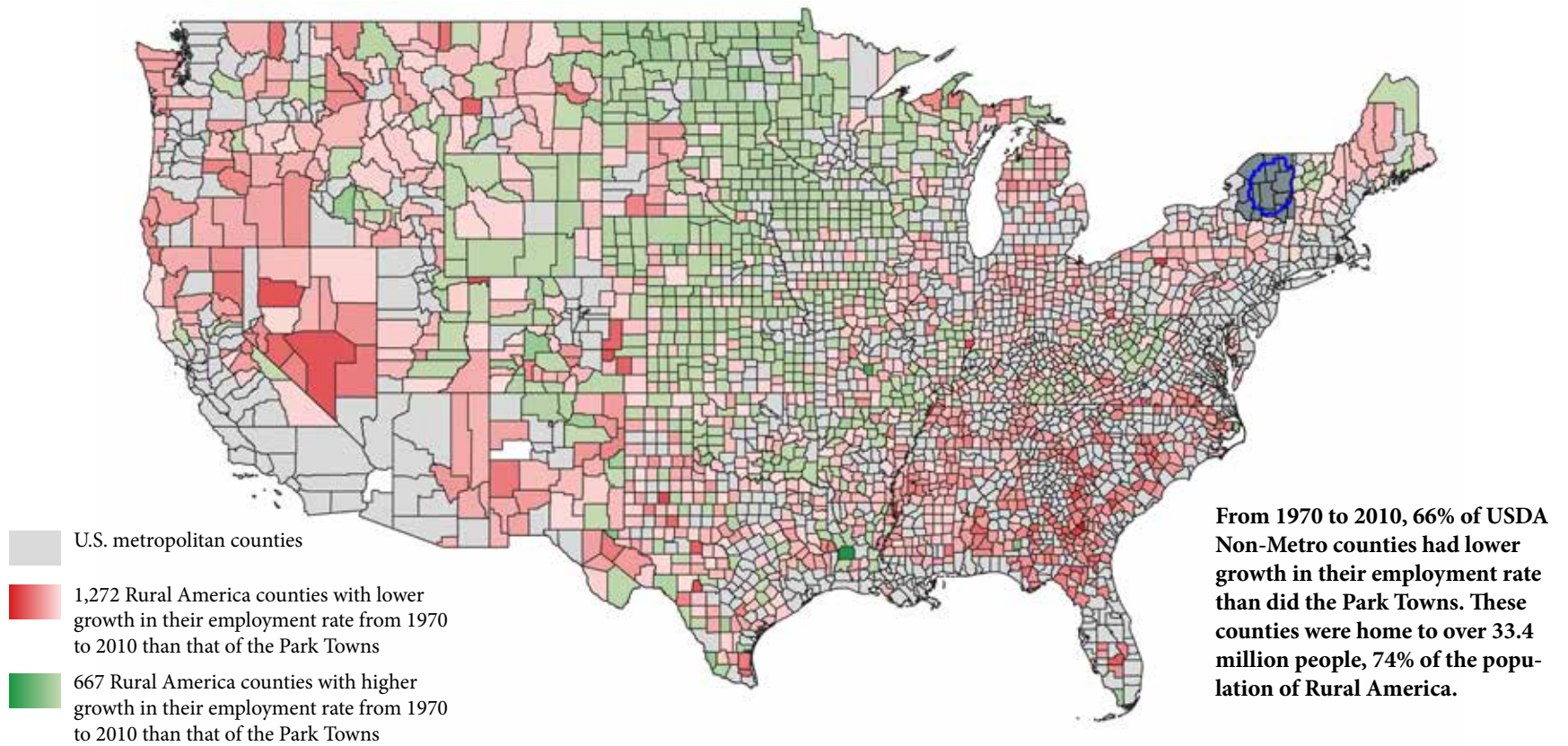
In 2010, 41% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had a lower employment rate than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 1.7 million people, 40% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.



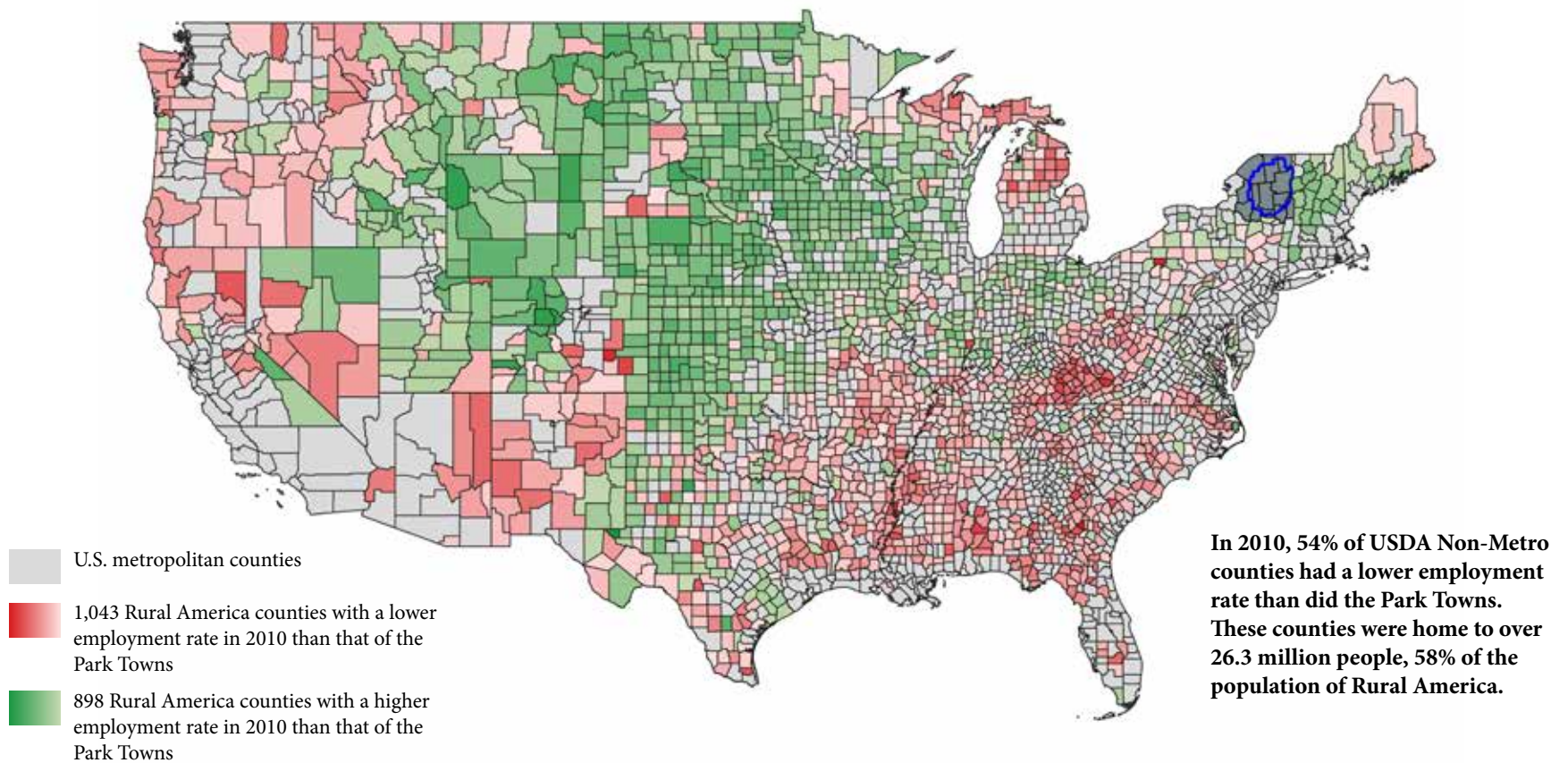


## Employment Rate Trends: Adirondack Park vs Rural America

**Figure 40: Comparison of changes in the employment rate, of people 16 years and older, from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and Rural America**



**Figure 41: Comparison of the employment rate, of people 16 years and older, in 2010 between the Park Towns and Rural America**





## Self-Employment Rate Trends: Adirondack Park vs New York State

### Key Findings

The increase in the Park Towns' self-employment rate of people 16 years of age or older from 1970 to 2010 was greater than the increases for the U.S. and other rural areas but lagged behind New York State.

The Park Towns' 2010 self-employment rate of 6.6% was higher than the rates of New York State and the U.S.

The Park Towns' 2010 self-employment rate of 6.6% was higher than that of 2,044 counties, home to 79% of the population of the U.S.

The Park Towns' 2010 self-employment rate of 6.6% was higher than that of 1,114 rural counties, home to 72% of the population of Rural America.

**Table 10: Change in the Self-Employment Rate, of People 16 Years and Older, in New York and U.S., 1970–2010**

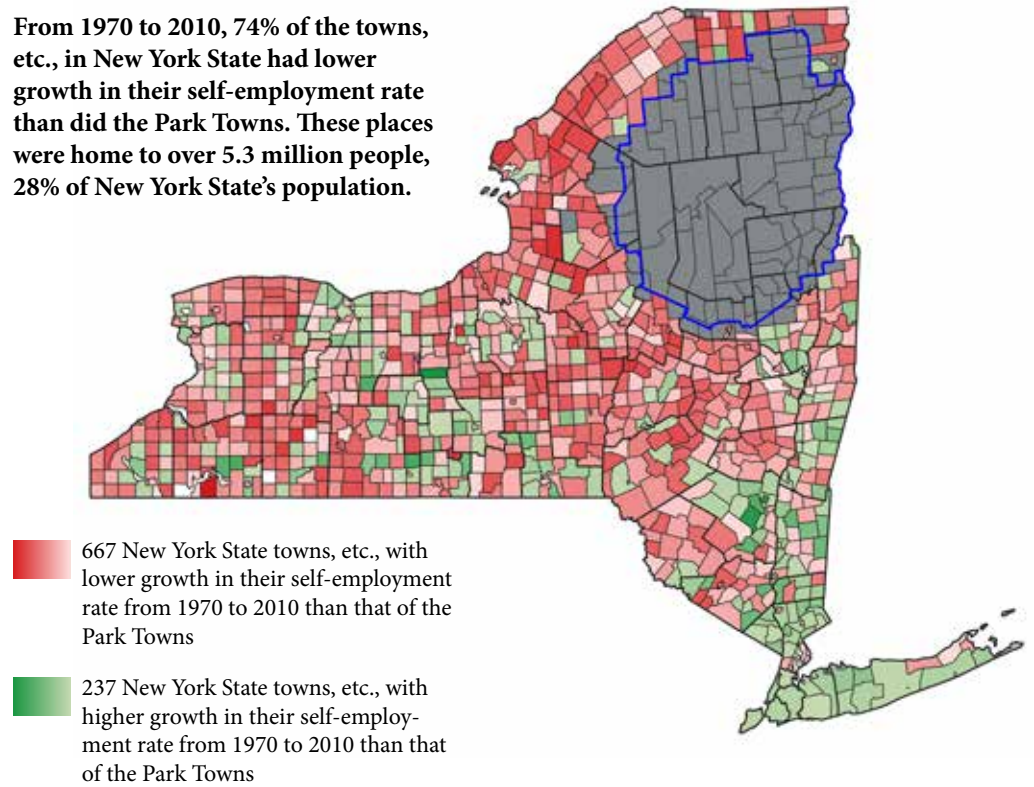
Area	1970	2010	Change
New York State	3.4%	5.6%	64.5%
Rural NY Towns	7.0	6.3	-10.2%
Park Towns	4.4	6.6	50.8%
Split Towns	4.2	5.0	19.2%
United States	4.2	5.6	32.8%

The self-employment rate of people 16 years and older in a region is an important economic indicator, especially for rural areas, which traditionally have seen much higher rates of self-employment than metropolitan areas. The self-employment rate grew rapidly in the U.S. and New York State from 1970 to 2010, while showing modest growth for rural areas in the Northeast U.S. and major losses in other rural areas. The drop in the self-employment rate is an alarming trend in rural areas because these regions have long supported high levels of small businesses and family farms.

The percentage of growth in the self-employment rate in the 62 Park Towns in these years was an

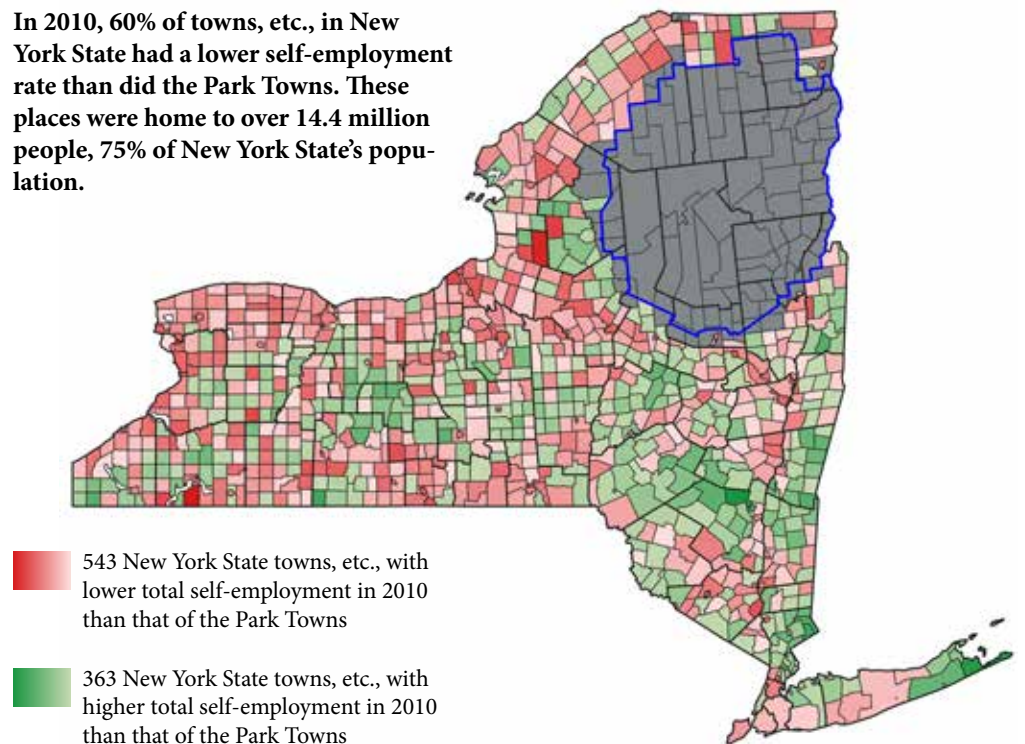
**Figure 42: Comparison of changes in the self-employment rate, of people 16 years and older, from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and New York State towns, cities, and boroughs**

From 1970 to 2010, 74% of the towns, etc., in New York State had lower growth in their self-employment rate than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 5.3 million people, 28% of New York State's population.



**Figure 43: Comparison of the self-employment rate, of people 16 years and older, in 2010 between the Park Towns and New York State towns, cities, and boroughs**

In 2010, 60% of towns, etc., in New York State had a lower self-employment rate than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 14.4 million people, 75% of New York State's population.

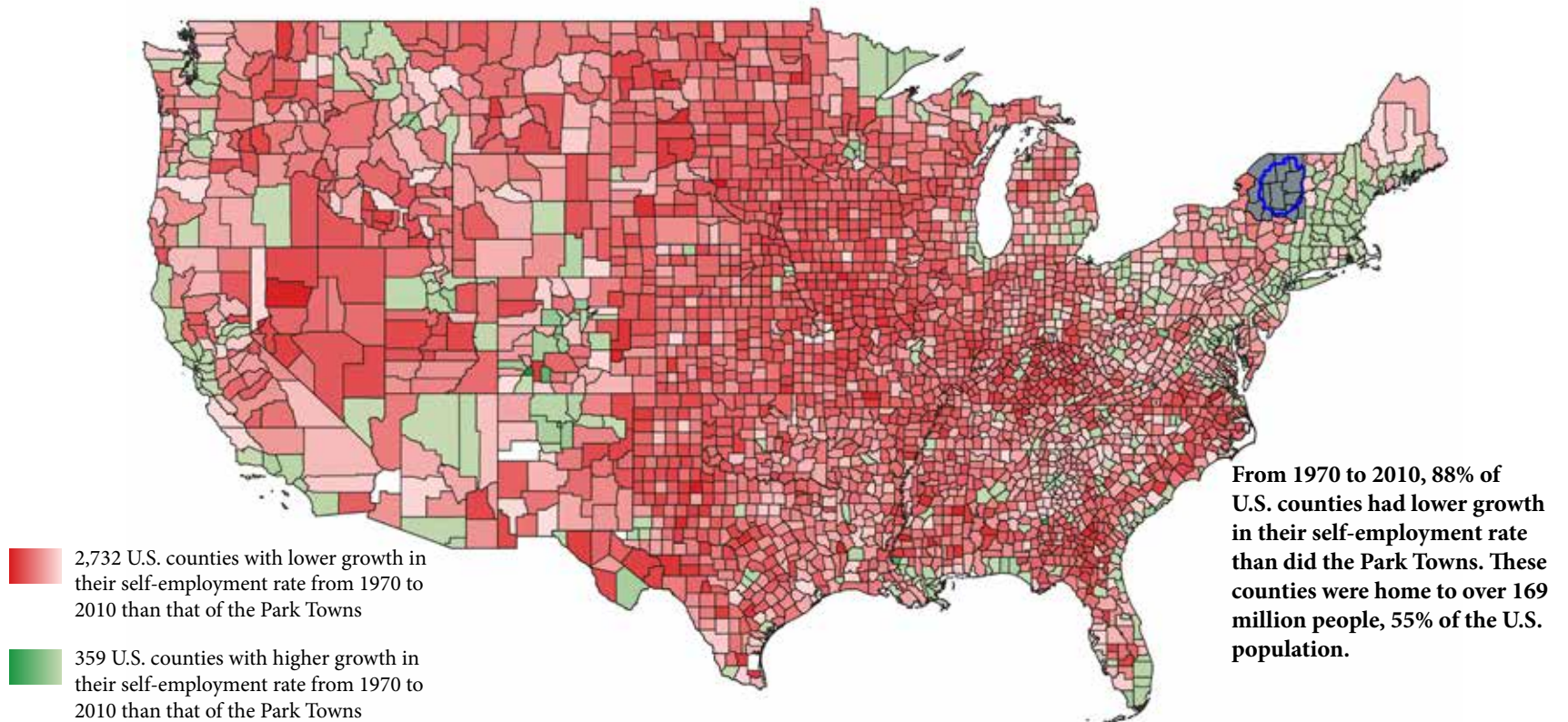


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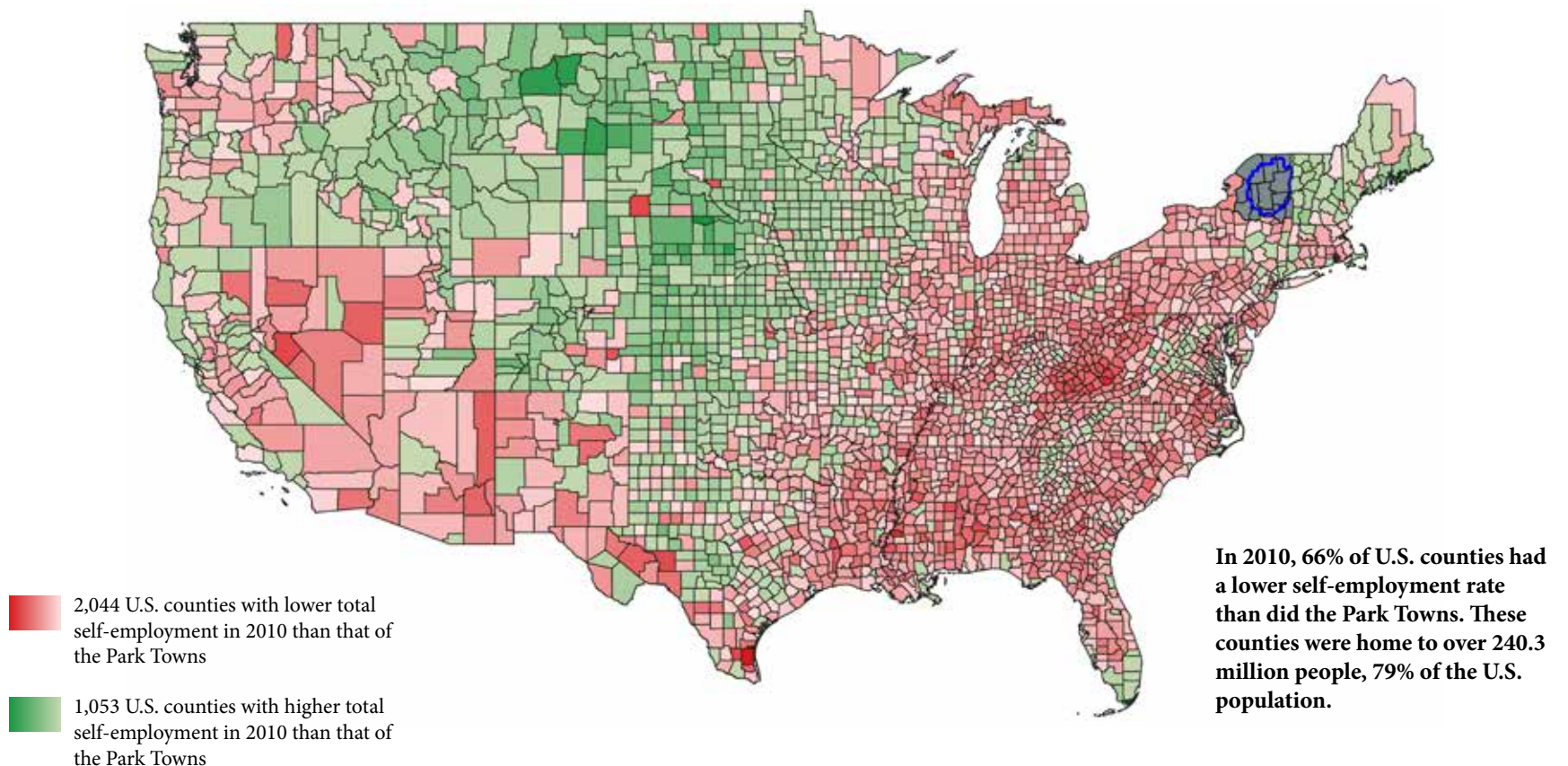


## Self-Employment Rate Trends: Adirondack Park vs the United States

**Figure 44: Comparison of changes in the self-employment rate, of people 16 years and older, from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and U.S. counties**



**Figure 45: Comparison of the self-employment rate, of people 16 years and older, in 2010 between the Park Towns and U.S. counties**





## Self-Employment Rate Trends: Adirondack Park vs Rural Northeast U.S.

continued from page 32

impressive 50.8%. This far exceeded the national gain of 32.8%, but lagged behind the New York State gain of 64.5%. In this way, the Park Towns tracked much closer to the New York State experience than to that of other rural areas, many of which experienced significant losses in self-employment. The -17.0% and -26.9% declines show a major upheaval in the economy of Rural America outside the Northeast U.S.

**Table 11: Change in the Self-Employment Rate, of People 16 Years and Older, in Rural America, 1970–2010**

Area	1970	2010	Change
Park Towns	4.4%	6.6%	50.8%
<b>Rural America</b>			
USDA Non-Metro U.S.	7.1	5.9	-17.0%
Low Density U.S.	9.1	6.6	-26.9%
USDA Non-Metro NE	4.8	6.6	38.7%
Low Density NE	5.5	7.3	33.6%

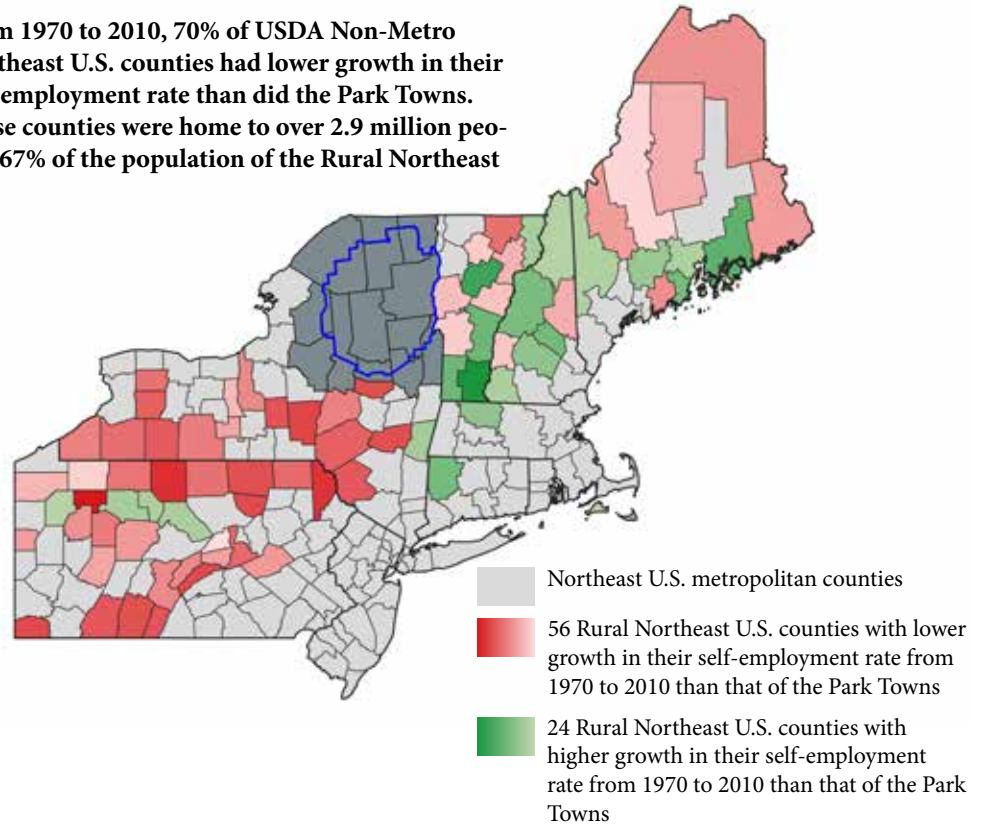
The maps on pages 32 and 33 highlight areas in New York State and the U.S. that either experienced lower growth in their self-employment rates than did the Park Towns from 1970 to 2010 or had lower self-employment rates in 2010 than that of the Park Towns. The maps on these two pages show large areas in the Rural Northeast and across Rural America that had lower growth in their self-employment rates than did the Park Towns.

The Adirondacks and the Rural Northeast U.S. stand out from other rural areas in terms of self-employment. The positive self-employment trend in the Adirondacks is something to investigate and possibly develop programs to strengthen.

A positive self-employment rate trend in the Adirondacks is consistent with its overall employment rate trends. While self-employment rates dropped in many other rural areas from 1970 to 2010, the Park Towns experienced a significant increase. The Park Towns' self-employment rate in 2010 was higher than the majority of New York State, the U.S. and Rural America. □

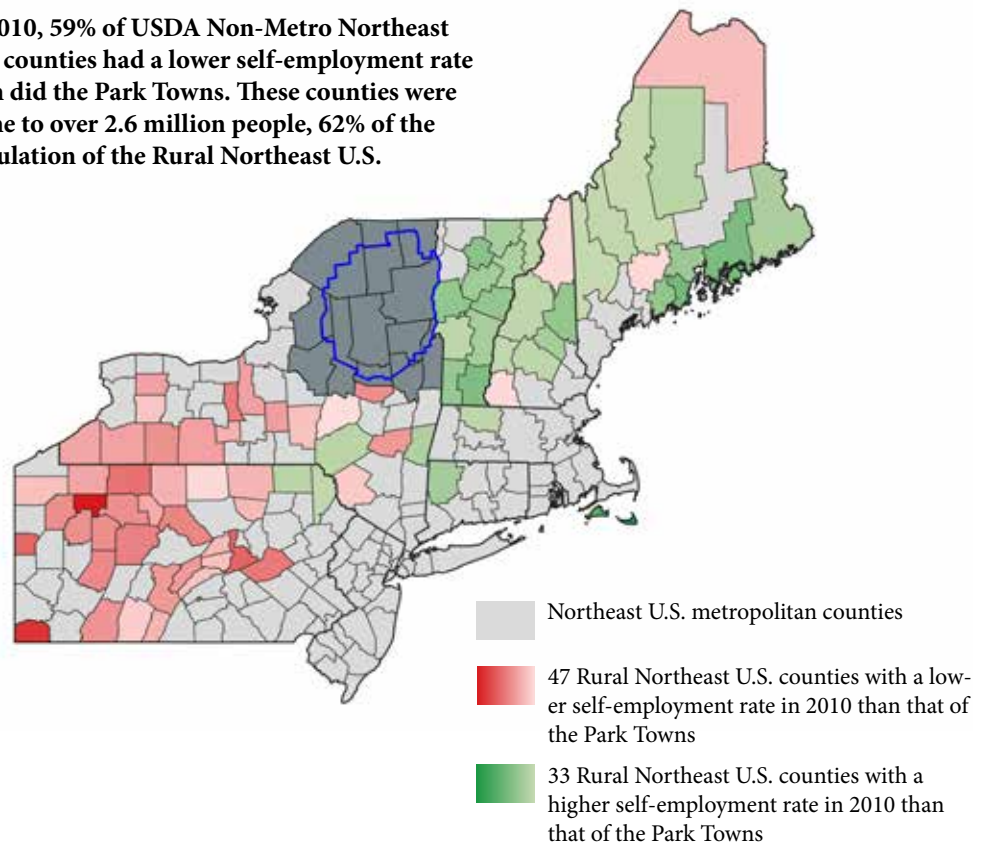
**Figure 46: Comparison of changes in the self-employment rate, of people 16 years and older, from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and the Rural Northeast U.S. counties**

From 1970 to 2010, 70% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had lower growth in their self-employment rate than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 2.9 million people, 67% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.



**Figure 47: Comparison of the self-employment rate, of people 16 years and older, in 2010 between the Park Towns and the Rural Northeast U.S. counties**

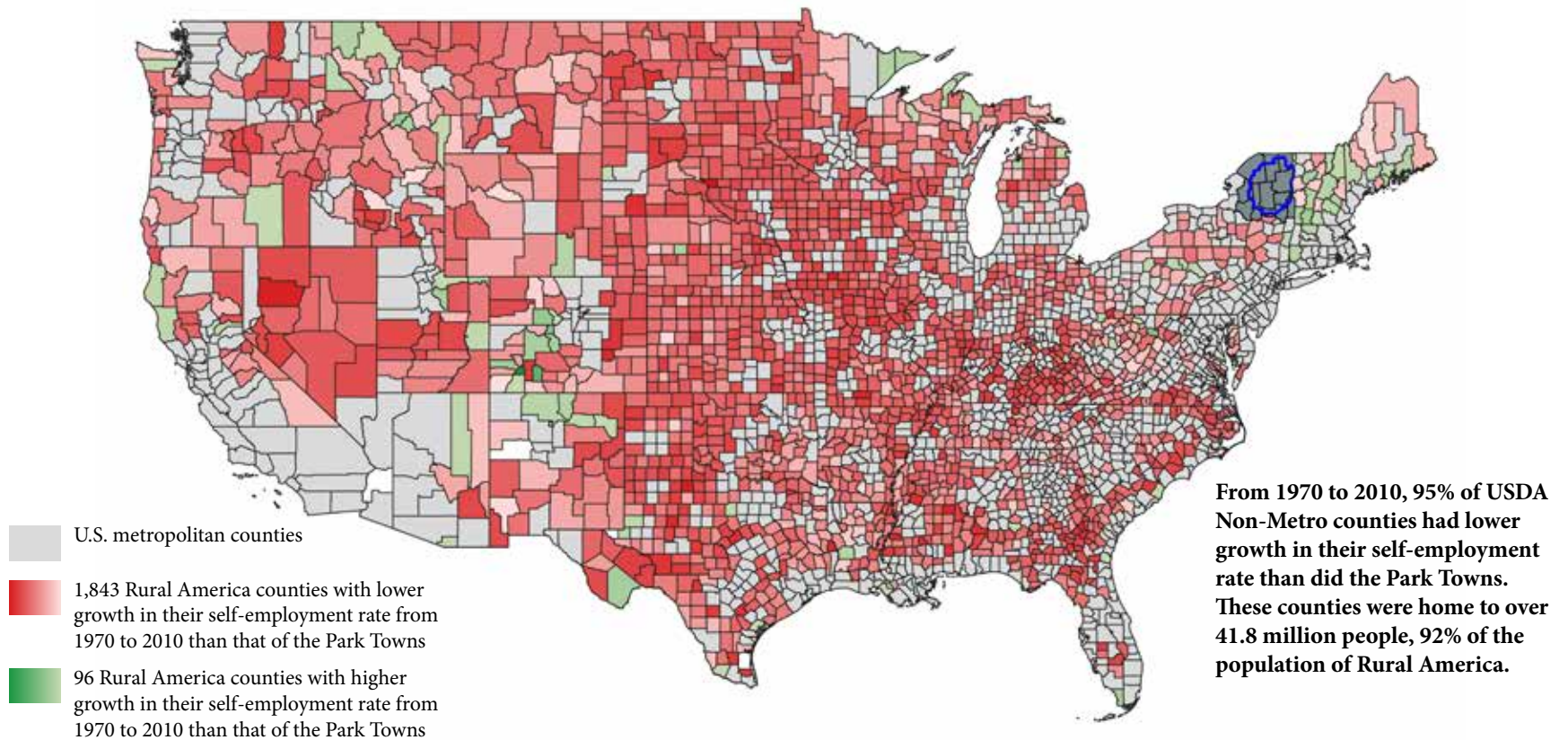
In 2010, 59% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had a lower self-employment rate than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 2.6 million people, 62% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.



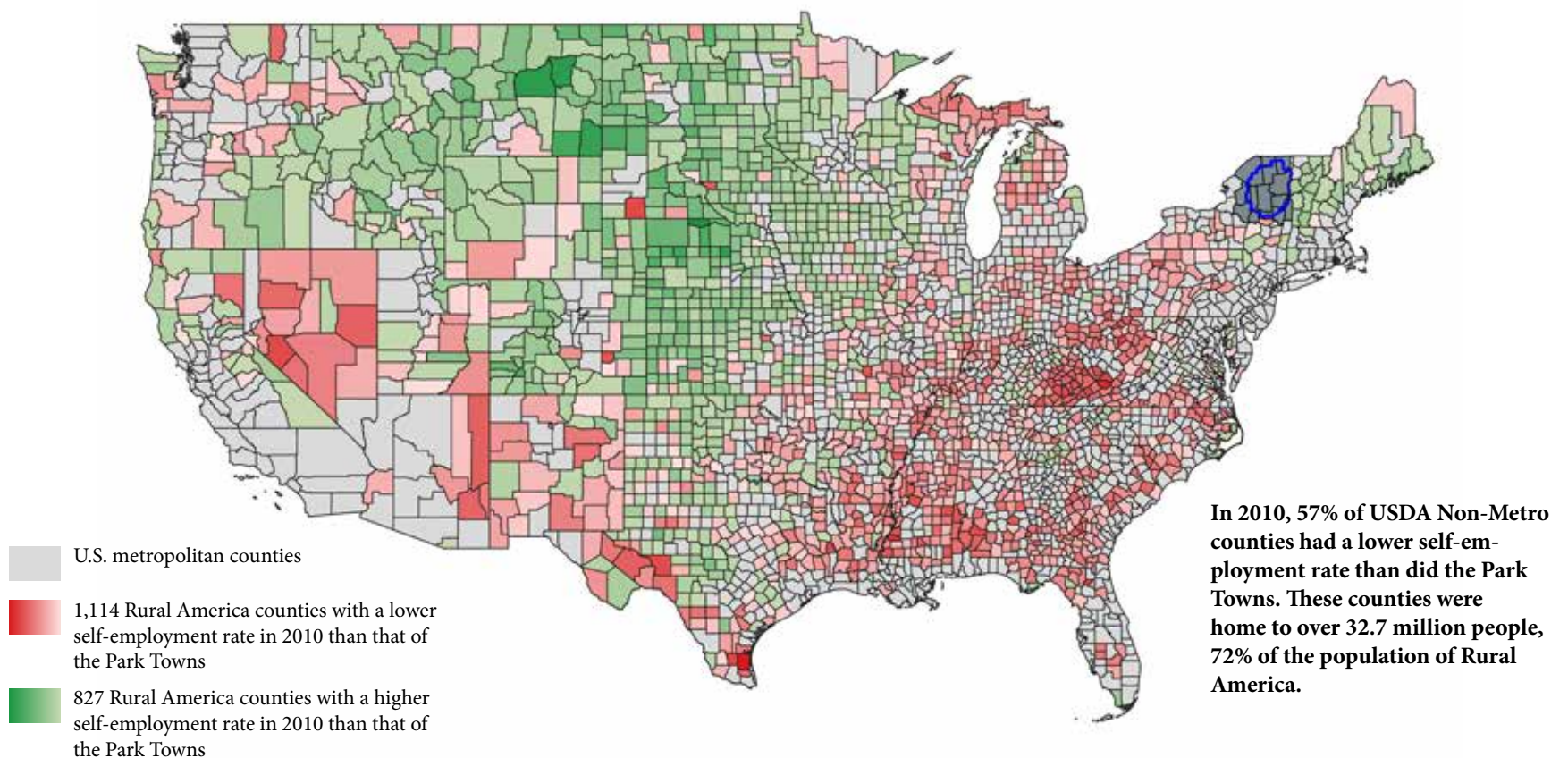


## Self-Employment Rate Trends: Adirondack Park vs Rural America

**Figure 48: Comparison of changes in the self-employment rate, of people 16 years and older, from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and Rural America**



**Figure 49: Comparison of the self-employment rate, of people 16 years and older, in 2010 between the Park Towns and Rural America**

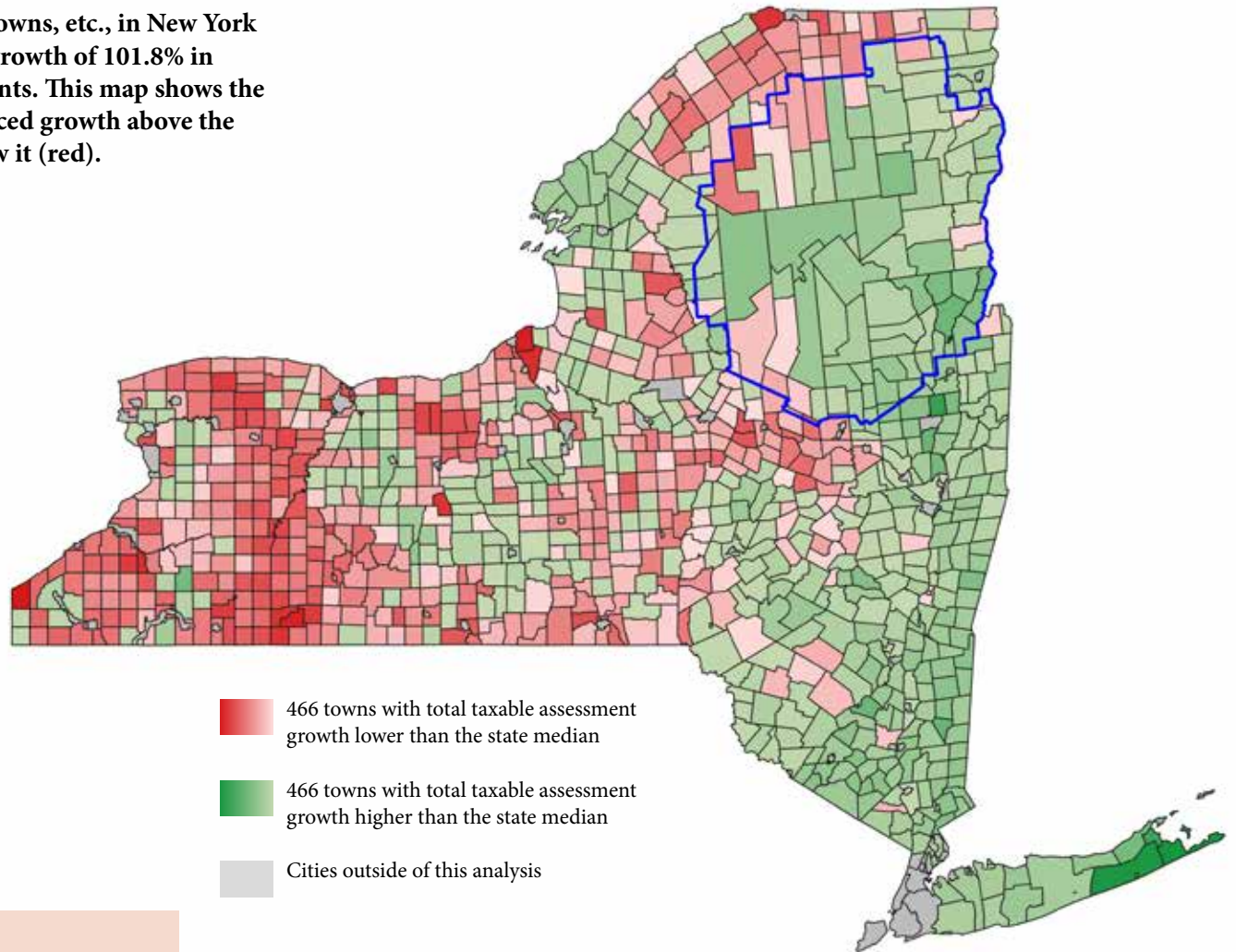




## Growth of New York State Total Taxable Assessments

**Figure 50: Total taxable assessment increases from 1982 to 2012 in New York State towns**

From 1982 to 2012, the 932 towns, etc., in New York State experienced a median growth of 101.8% in their Total Taxable Assessments. This map shows the rate at which towns experienced growth above the state median (green) or below it (red).



### Key Finding

Of the 62 Park Towns, 53 exceeded the New York median for growth in Total Taxable Assessments (the total land and improvements values in a town), while 9 were below. The majority of Park Towns had property assessment value growth that exceeded the state median.

Analysis of the growth of the Total Taxable Assessments of towns, cities, and boroughs across New York provides information about community growth or stagnation. Adirondack Park communities saw some of the biggest increases in total taxable assessed values in New York State from 1982 to 2012. The median change across New York towns over these 30 years was a growth in the total taxable assessed value of 101.8%, adjusted for inflation.

In New York, local governments assess all properties for their total values, for both land and improvements, whether or not they are tax-exempt. Each local government in the state generates a figure on an annual basis that shows its Total Full Value Tax Assessment. This is the total land and improvements value in a given town. The map above shows the change in the total tax value for the 932 towns, etc., across New York from 1982 to 2012 (cities, boroughs not included). These data were obtained from the New York State Office of the State Comptroller, which reported that data prior to 1982 were unreliable.

The map above shows growth in towns on Long Island, in the Hudson Valley, the Catskills, and the Adirondacks. Towns in central New York, the Southern Tier, and western New York that show growth

are often communities with a significant amount of shoreline lands.

The towns in New York with the greatest increases were on the east end of Long Island, where places such as East Hampton grew at a rate of 488% of the state median, Southampton 474%, and Shelter Island at 404%. The Saratoga County towns experienced impressive growth as well with Wilton at 423% and Malta at 309%.

In the Adirondacks, the Town of Bolton in Warren County, was the highest at 294% of the state median, followed by Horicon at 269%. North Elba in Essex County grew by 245%. Of the 62 Park Towns fully within the Adirondack Park, 53 exceeded the New York median, while 9 were below. Of the 30 Split Towns, 19 exceeded the state median and 11 were below. □



## Short-Term Economic Comparisons for the 62 Adirondack Park Towns, 2000–2010

### Key Finding

From 2000 to 2010, the Park Towns experienced stronger performances in five standard economic indicators than did the majority of New York State, the U.S. and Rural America.

A comparison from 2000 to 2010 shows that the 62 Adirondack Park Towns performed better in standard economic indicators than did many other towns, etc., across New York and counties across the U.S. and Rural America. In general, when compared with the country as a whole or other rural areas, the Park Towns fared well.

These comparisons show that in these years the 62 Park Towns had a higher growth in median household income and per capita income than did wide swaths of the U.S. and Rural America. The Park Towns also performed better than did nearly two-thirds of New York towns.

The poverty rate of the Park Towns rose incrementally at 0.27%, which was lower than that of many other U.S. and rural counties.

Short-term employment rates showed a drop of the percent employed in the population 16 years or older of -3.5% in the Park Towns, likely an impact of the Great Recession starting in 2008. Despite the -3.5% drop, the Park Towns' rate was in the top half of towns and counties across New York State, the U.S., and Rural America.

The Park Towns' self-employment rate increased by 2.1%, a rate that exceeded that of vast areas across New York, the U.S. and Rural America. While more research is needed on the types and quality of these jobs, self-employment appears to be a strong positive trend line in the Adirondacks. □

**Table 12: Comparison of short-term economic indicators between Adirondack Park towns and New York State, the U.S., and Rural America, 2000–2010**

Economic Trend	New York State Towns, Etc.	United States Counties	Rural America Counties
<b>Median Household Income Growth Rate</b>			
Areas with lower median household income growth than the 9.65% of the 62 Park Towns	<b>71%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>79%</b>
<b>Per Capita Income Growth Rate</b>			
Areas with a lower per capita income growth rate than the 11.68% of the 62 Park Towns	<b>62%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Poverty Rate Growth</b>			
Areas with a higher growth in the poverty rate than the 0.27% of the 62 Park Towns	<b>63%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>70%</b>
<b>Employment Rate Growth</b>			
Areas with a lower growth in the employment rate than the -3.5% of the 62 Park Towns	<b>55%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>59%</b>
<b>Self-Employment Rate Growth</b>			
Areas with a lower growth in the self-employment rate than the 2.1% of the 62 Park Towns	<b>63%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>86%</b>



## Population Trends: Adirondack Park vs New York State

### Key Findings

From 1970 to 2010, the Park Towns' population increased by 11.6%, a rate that exceeded New York State's population growth of 6.2%.

The Park Towns' population increase from 1970 to 2010 was higher than that of 1,145 counties with 22% of the U.S. population and 935 rural counties with 33% of the population of Rural America.

In 2010, the Park Towns were part of vast American landscape of declining population. This area consisted of 1,082 counties, covered 32% of the U.S. land area, and was home to over 43.3 million people.

**Table 13: Change in Population in New York and U.S., 1970–2010**

Area	1970	2010	Change
New York State	18,228,116	19,363,965	6.2%
Rural NY Towns	51,603	61,075	18.4%
Park Towns	93,140	103,953	11.6%
Split Towns	93,272	126,261	35.4%
United States	201,197,406	305,654,584	51.9%

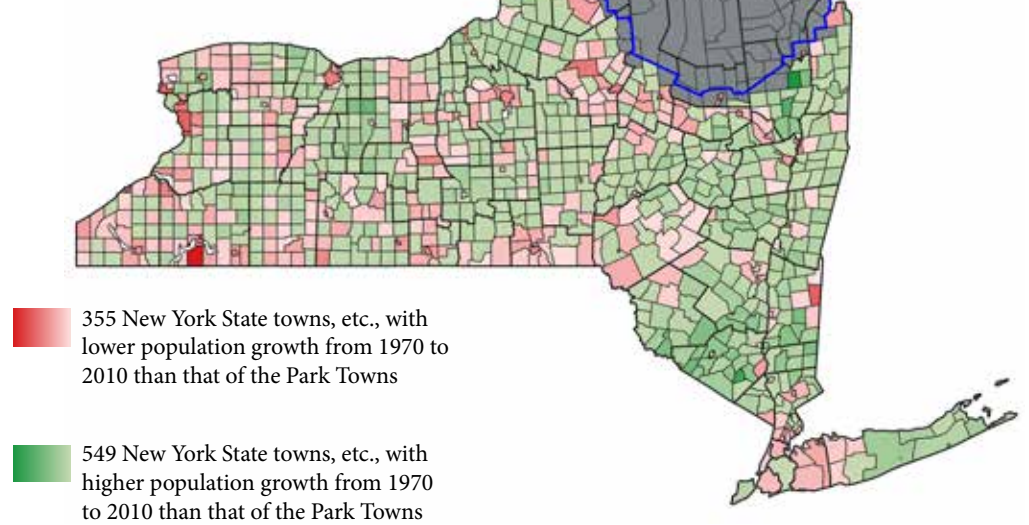
Population growth is a key indicator for measuring community and regional vitality. From 1970 to 2010, the overall U.S. population increased by nearly 52%, from 201.2 million to over 305.6 million people. In these years, New York State experienced a modest 6.2% increase, which lagged far behind national growth. It's important to note where population growth occurred 1970 to 2010. The 1,941 USDA Non-Metro counties, which covered 68% of the lower 48 states in the U.S. and is the geography that we use in this report as the landscape of Rural America, gained over 9.4 million people in 40 years. Metropolitan areas in the U.S. grew by nearly 95 million people.

From 1970 to 2010, the Park Towns experienced an 11.6% growth in population, which though it exceeded the population growth of New York State, was lower than the large increase in the Split Towns of 35.4% and growth in Rural New York of 18.4%. Rural America in general (see Table 14 on

*continued on page 40*

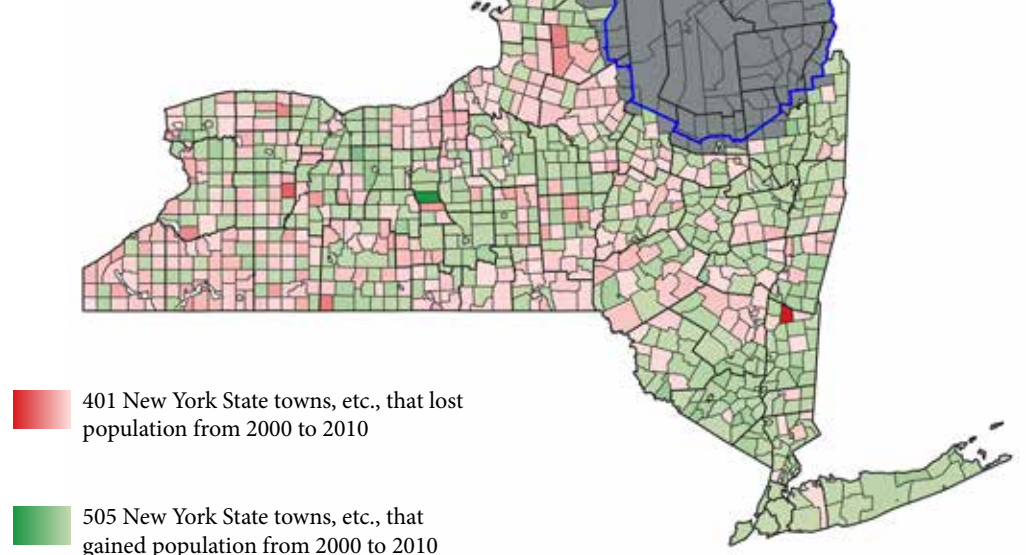
**Figure 51: Comparison of population growth from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and New York State towns, cities, and boroughs**

From 1970 to 2010, 39% of the towns, etc., in New York State had lower population growth than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 11.4 million people, 60% of New York State's population.



**Figure 52: Population increases and decreases in New York State towns, cities, and boroughs, 2000 to 2010**

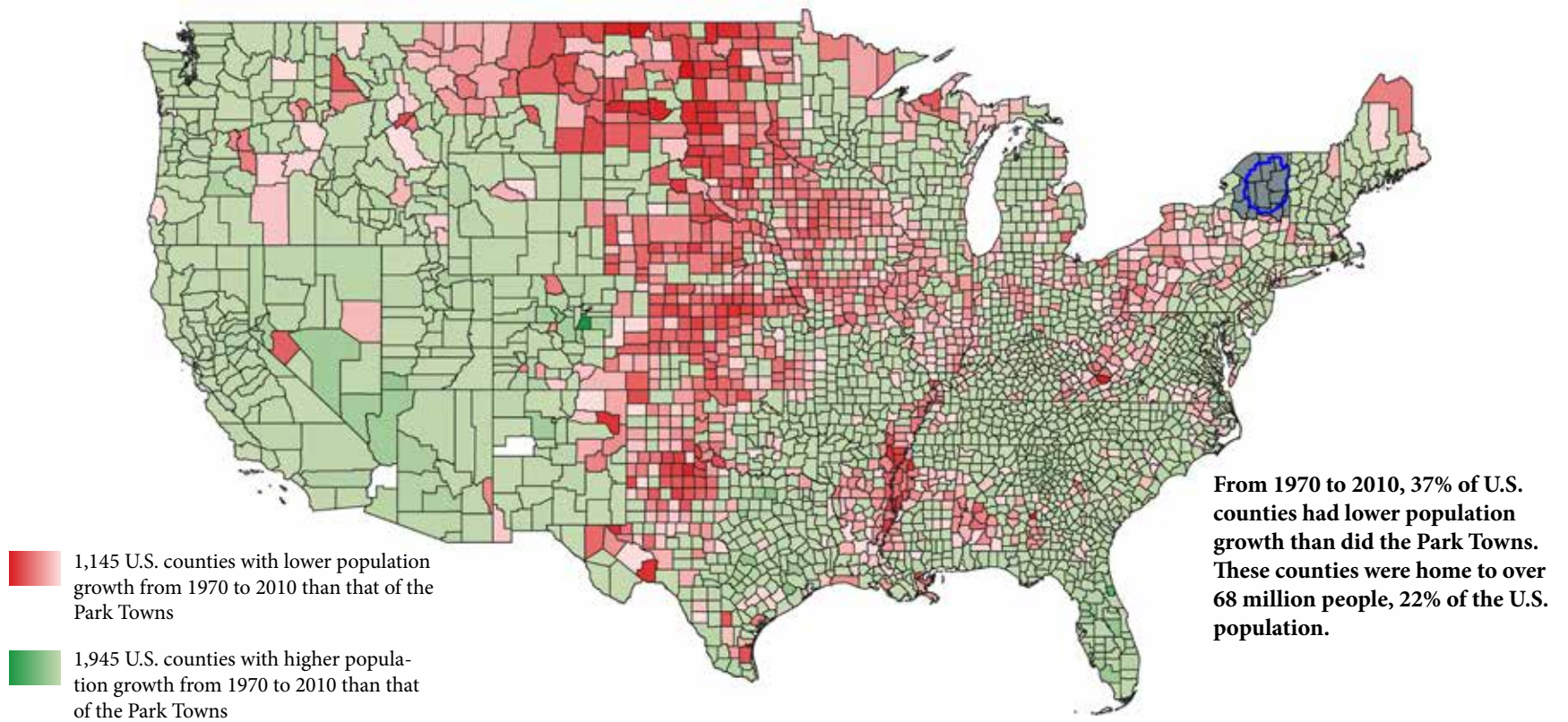
From 2000 to 2010, 44% of towns, etc., in New York State lost population. These places were home to over 3.3 million people, 17% of New York State's population.



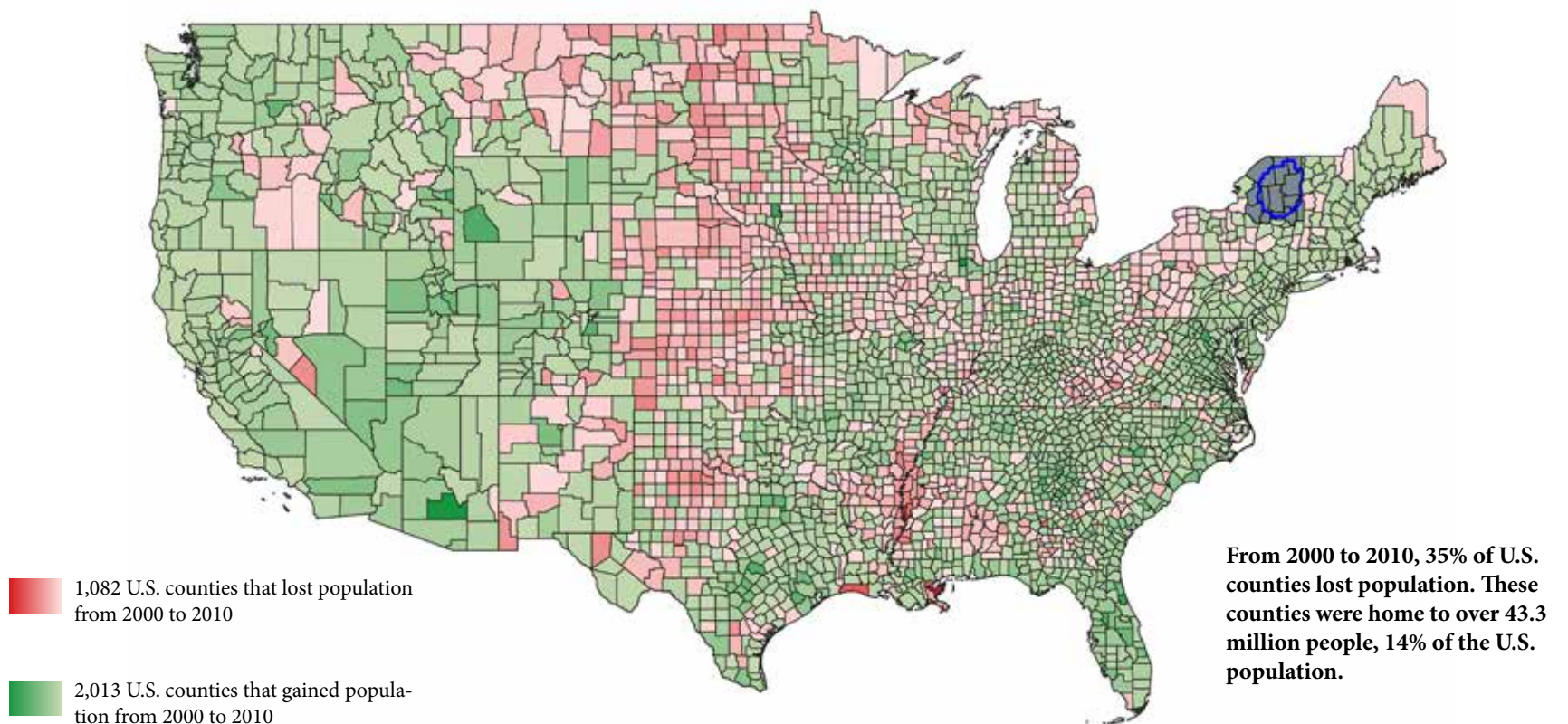


## Population Trends: Adirondack Park vs the United States

**Figure 53: Comparison of population growth from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and U.S. counties**



**Figure 54: Population increases and decreases in U.S. counties, 2000 to 2010**





## Population Trends: Adirondack Park vs Rural Northeast U.S.

*continued from page 38*

page 40) also saw impressive population growth of 25.6% up to 26.3%. The Low Density Northeast U.S. counties saw an 11% population gain, similar to the Park Towns.

Maps on pages 38 and 39 show that from 1970 to 2010, 39% of New York State towns, etc., and 37% of U.S. counties had population gains less than the Park Town's rate of 11.6%.

**Table 14: Change in Population in Rural America, 1970–2010**

Area	1970	2010	Change
Park Towns	93,140	103,953	11.6%
<b>Rural America</b>			
USDA Non-Metro U.S.	35,976,466	45,436,912	26.3%
Low Density U.S.	16,148,876	20,276,821	25.6%
USDA Non-Metro NE	3,704,423	4,311,869	16.4%
Low Density NE	448,965	498,361	11.0%

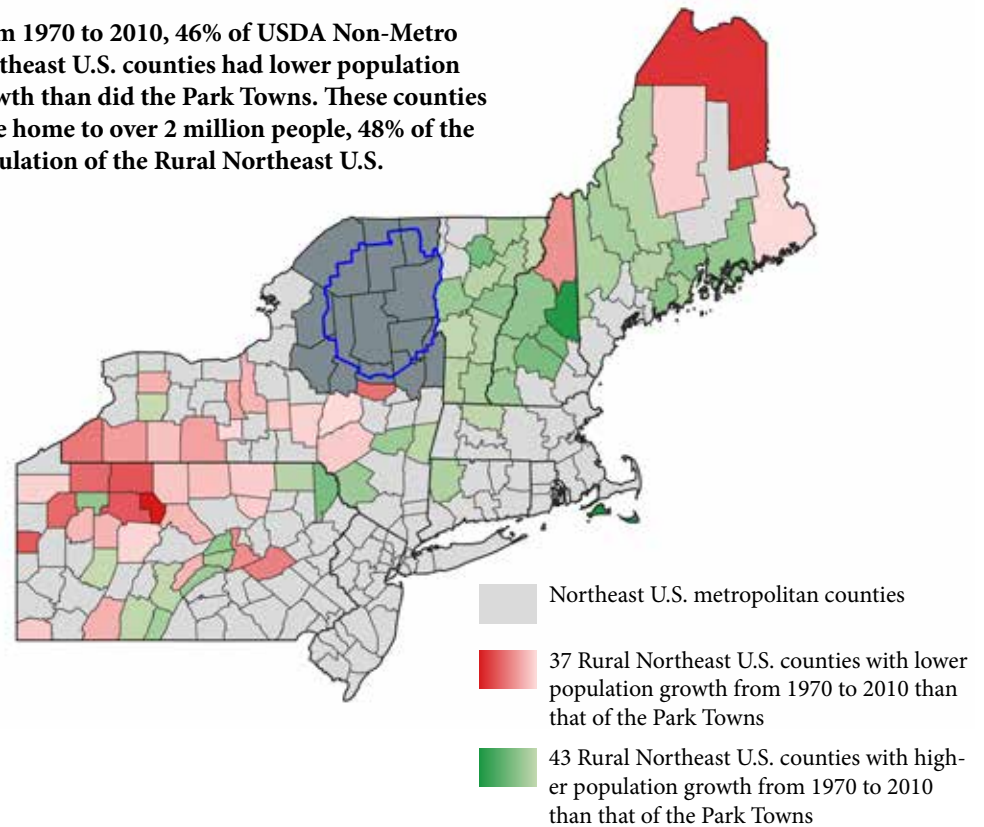
The maps in Figures 55 and 57 on these two pages highlight areas across Rural America that saw lower population gains from 1970 to 2010 than that of the Park Towns. These areas were home to nearly half of the population of the Rural Northeast and one-third of Rural America.

From 2000 to 2010, the Park Towns experienced a 1% population drop (see a detailed breakdown on page 65). In 2010, the Park Towns were part of a vast American landscape characterized by declining population. From 2000 to 2010, 44% of New York State towns, etc., lost population. In this decade 1,082 U.S. counties, 35% of the nation, lost population. Across Rural America, 47% of the counties lost population. Across the rural Northeast, 44% of the counties lost population.

The trend of slow, inexorable population loss in rural areas across the U.S. is likely to continue for decades and is the reality for most Adirondack communities. Many parts of the Adirondacks, like many parts of Rural America, are struggling to confront population loss. A declining population was the reality from 2000 to 2010 for nearly half of the sprawling Rural America landscape, and creates a major challenge for rural areas like the Adirondack Park. □

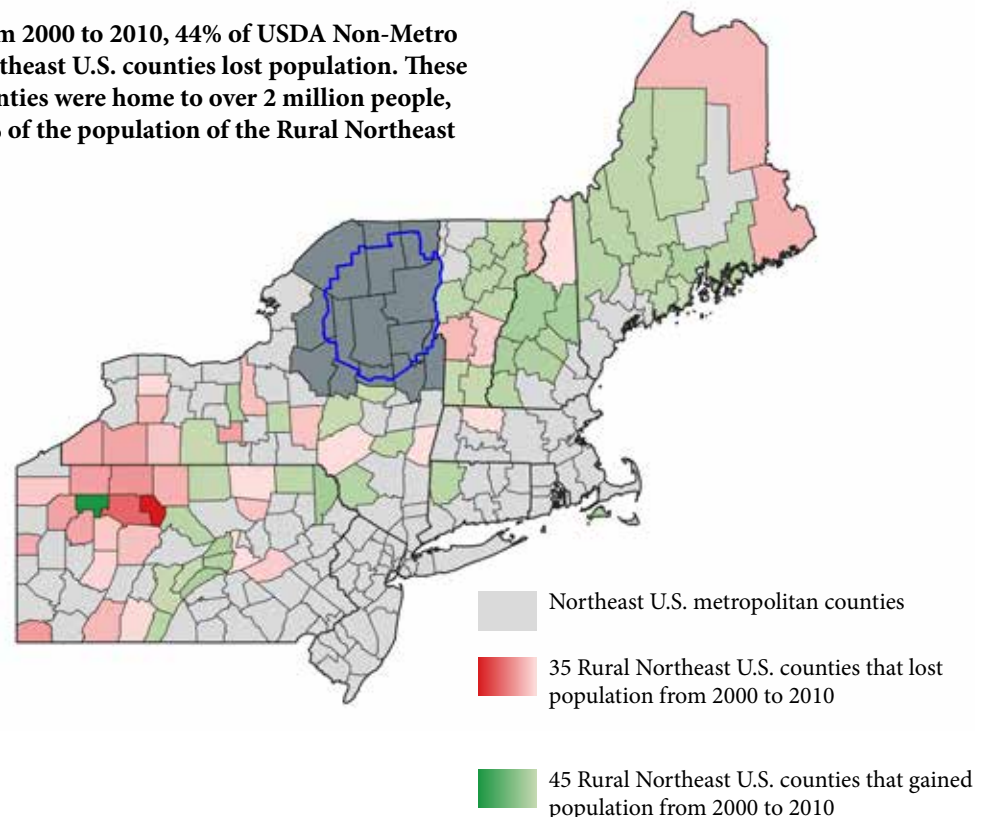
**Figure 55: Comparison of population growth from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and the Rural Northeast U.S. counties**

From 1970 to 2010, 46% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had lower population growth than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 2 million people, 48% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.



**Figure 56: Population increases and decreases in the Rural Northeast U.S. counties, 2000 to 2010**

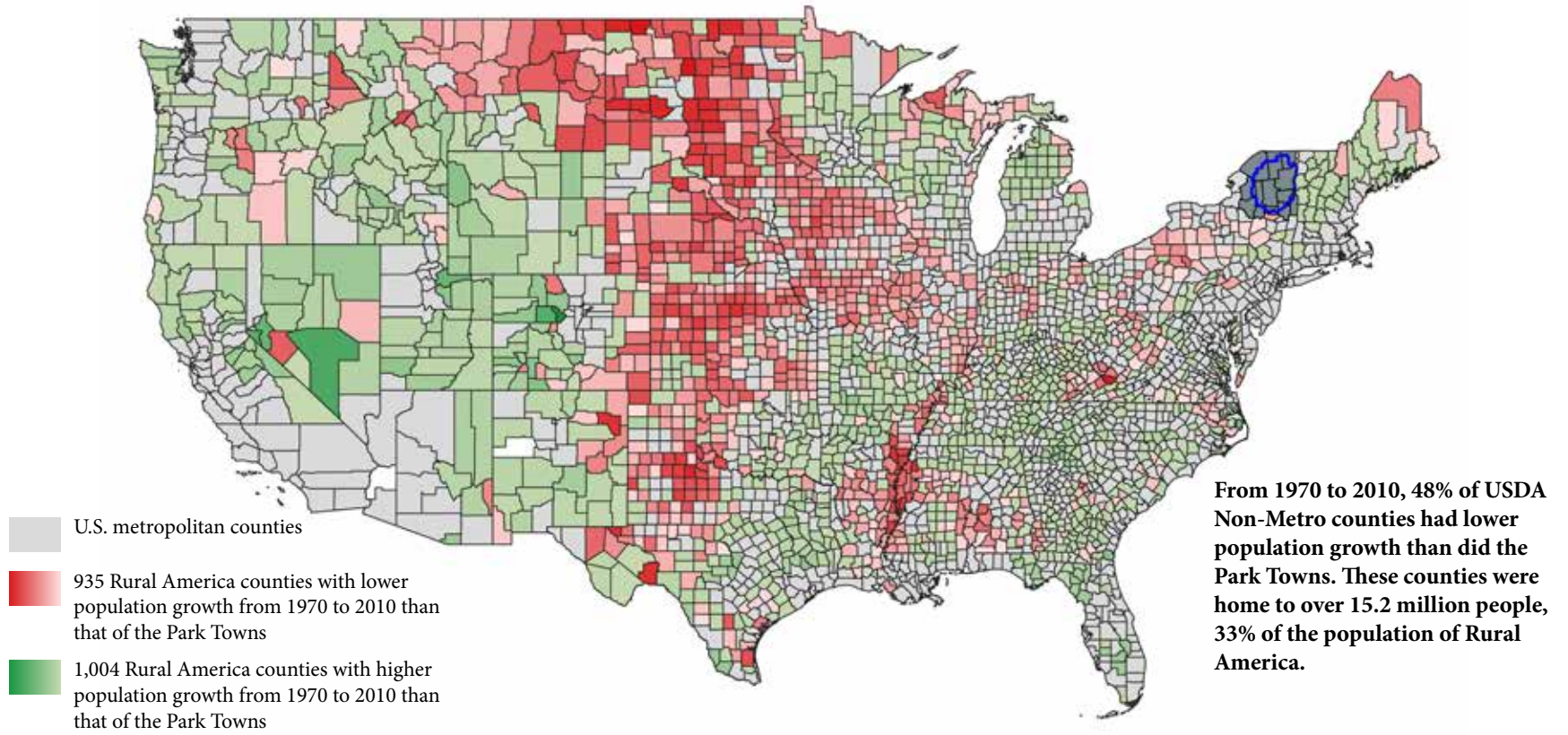
From 2000 to 2010, 44% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties lost population. These counties were home to over 2 million people, 47% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.



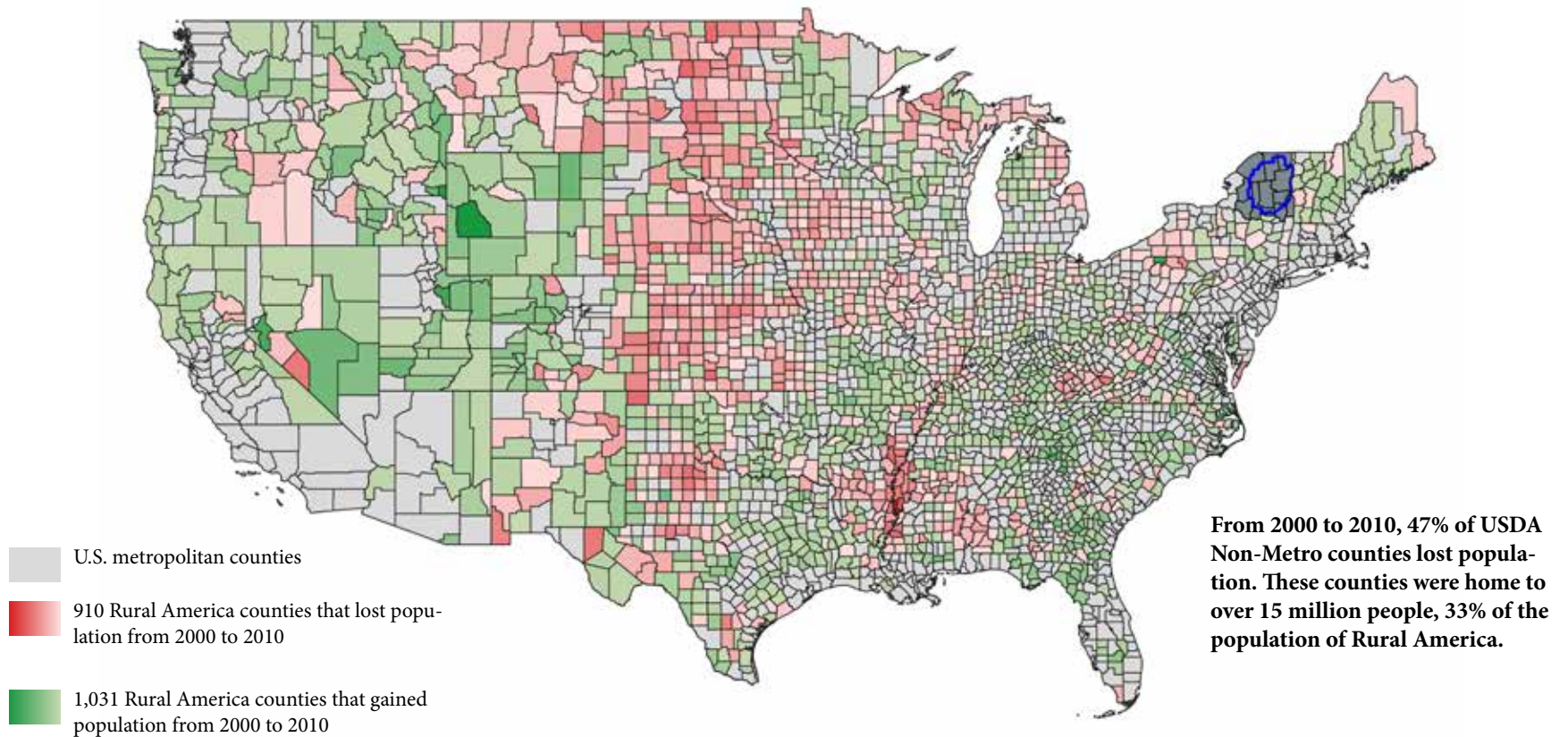


## Population Trends: Adirondack Park vs Rural America

**Figure 57: Comparison of population growth from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and Rural America**



**Figure 58: Population increases and decreases in Rural America, 2000 to 2010**





## Median Age Trends: Adirondack Park vs New York State

### Key Findings

The Park Towns' median age in 2010 was 45.7 years, similar to the median age of 45.0 years of the Low Density Northeast counties, but much higher than New York State's median age of 37.9 years and the U.S. median age of 37.1 years.

In 2010, even though the Park Towns' median age of 45.7 years was one of the highest in the U.S., there were 525 counties across the U.S., one out of every six counties, with a population of over 13.4 million people, that had a higher median age.

**Table 15: Change in Median Age in New York and the U.S., 1980–2010**

Area	1980	2010	Change
New York State	31.9 years	37.9 years	6.0 years
Rural NY Towns	30.6	43.6	13.0
Park Towns	31.8	45.7	13.9
Split Towns	28.2	42.3	14.1
United States	30.0	37.1	7.1

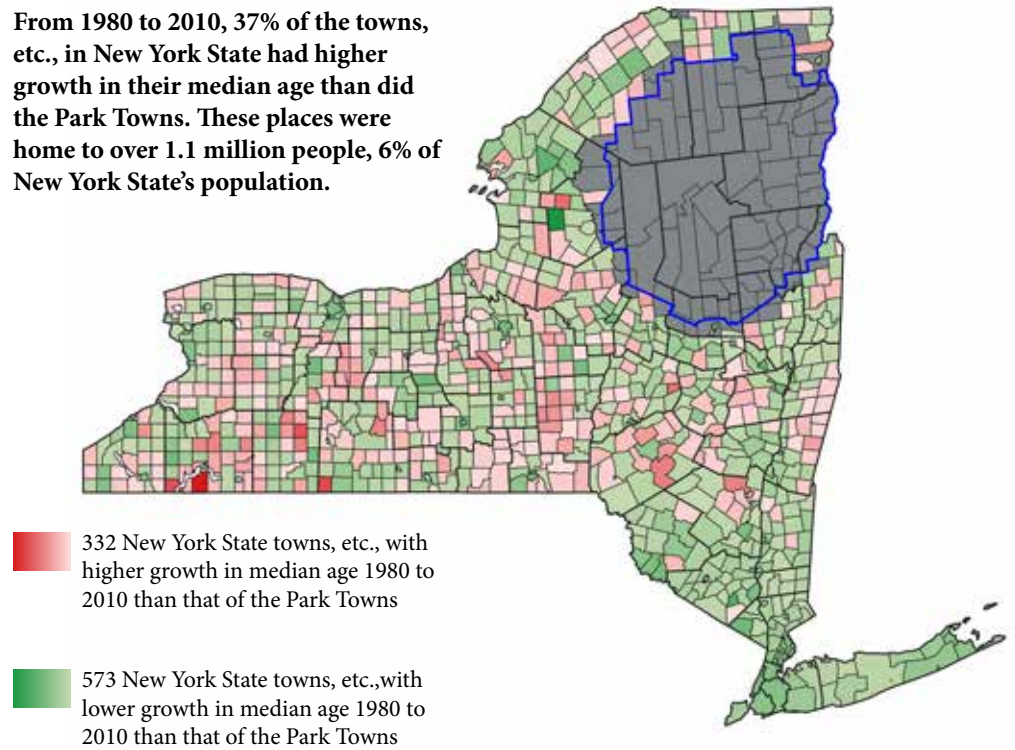
The median age of a region is an important measure because it is informative about the needs and activities of the population. A younger median age shows, potentially, a high number of families with children and young people who can grow the work force. An older median age shows a high number of people at the end of their working careers or in retirement. The needs of younger and older populations are very different.

The Park Towns' 1980 median age of 31.8 years was higher than all other regions studied in this report, except for New York State, which was 31.9 years. Thirty years later in 2010, the Park Towns saw its median age increase to 45.7 years, which was the highest of all areas in this report, though the Low Density Northeast counties were close with 45.0 years. Whereas the Park Towns showed consistent or better economic performances than national averages, its median age is an outlier. In 2010, just 19% of New York State towns, etc., and 17% of U.S. counties had median ages higher than that of the Park Towns.

*continued on page 44*

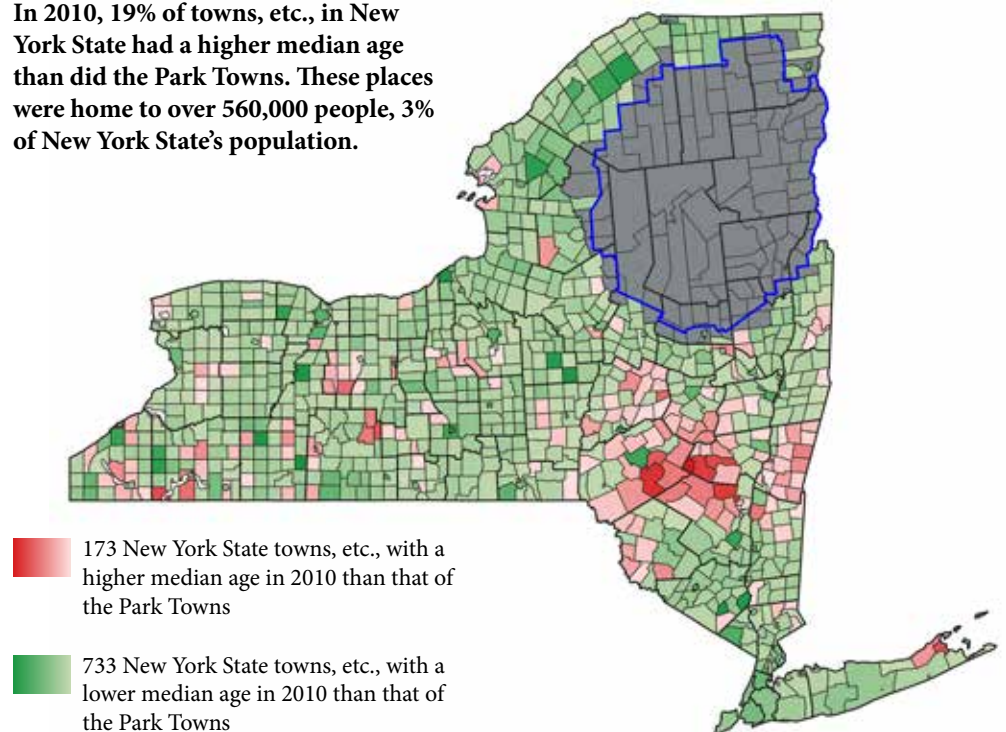
**Figure 59: Comparison of changes in median age from 1980 to 2010 between the Park Towns and New York State towns, cities, and boroughs**

From 1980 to 2010, 37% of the towns, etc., in New York State had higher growth in their median age than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 1.1 million people, 6% of New York State's population.



**Figure 60: Comparison of median age in 2010 between the Park Towns and New York State towns, cities, and boroughs**

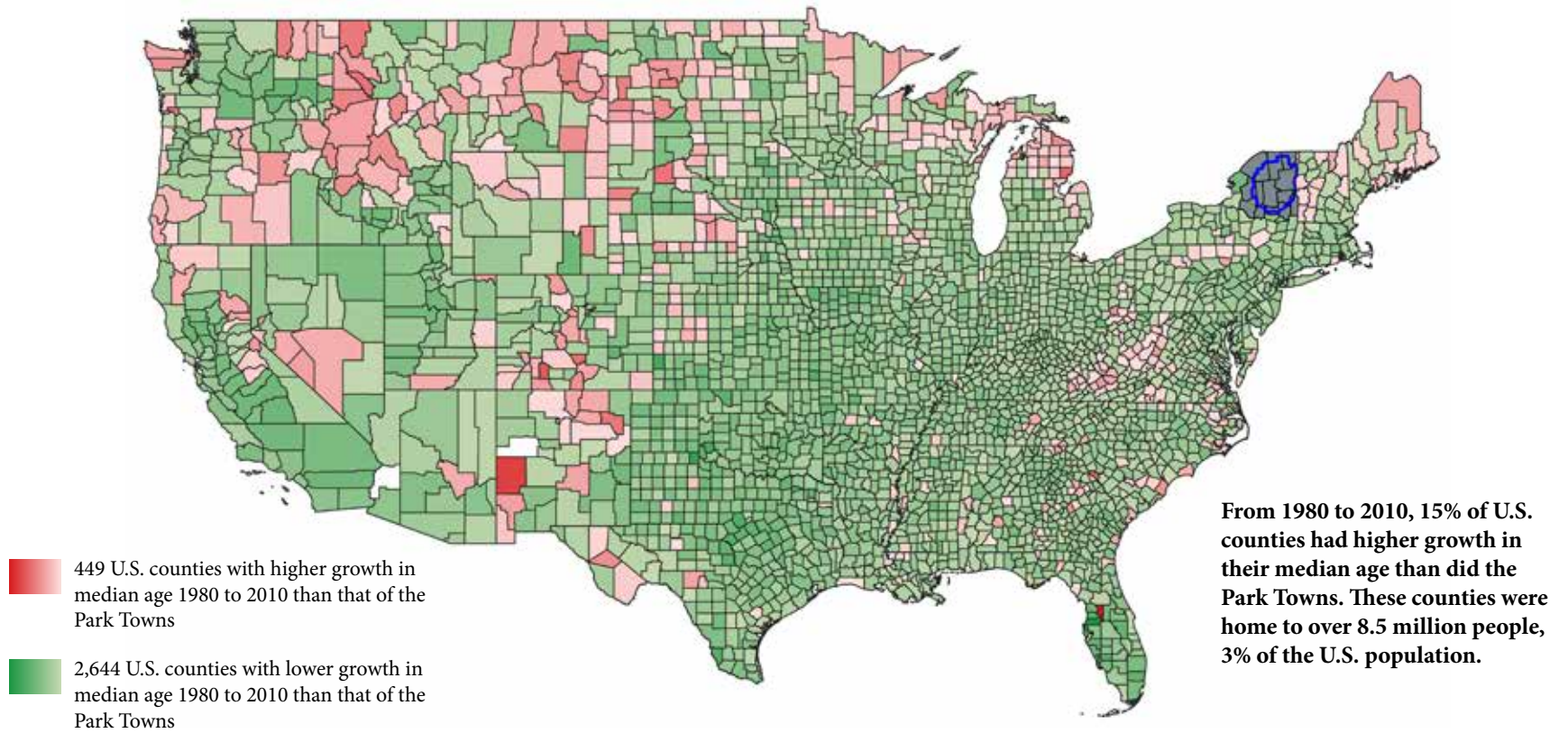
In 2010, 19% of towns, etc., in New York State had a higher median age than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 560,000 people, 3% of New York State's population.



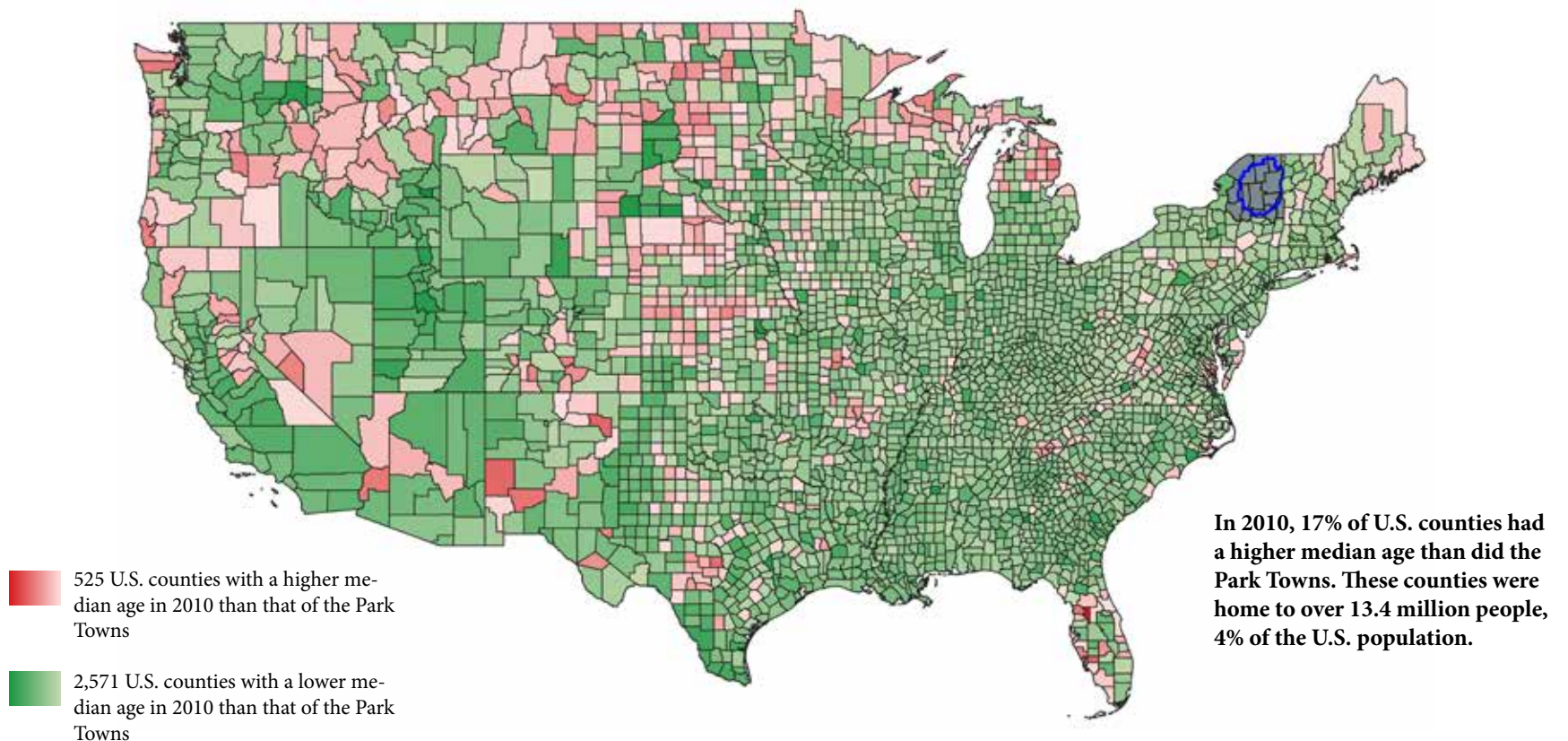


## Median Age Trends: Adirondack Park vs the United States

**Figure 61: Comparison of changes in median age from 1980 to 2010 between the Park Towns and U.S. counties**



**Figure 62: Comparison of median age in 2010 between the Park Towns and U.S. counties**





## Median Age Trends: Adirondack Park vs Rural Northeast U.S.

*continued from page 42*

Two questions should be asked about median age. First, how fast is a community aging? The 62 Park Towns experienced an increase of 13.9 years from 1980 to 2010, whereas the Split Towns aged by 14.1 years and Rural New York Towns by 13.0 years. The Low Density Northeast counties rose by 14.1 years.

Second, how does the median age compare with that of other places? In 2010, the Park Town median age was 45.7 years. The Rural New York towns was 43.6 and the Low Density Northeast counties had a median age of 45.0 years. The maps on pages 42 and 43 show that the median age of the Park Towns was higher than that of the overwhelming majority of New York State and the U.S. Across the U.S. in 2010, just 525 counties, with 4% of the U.S. population, had a higher median age.

**Table 16: Change in Median Age in Rural America, 1980–2010**

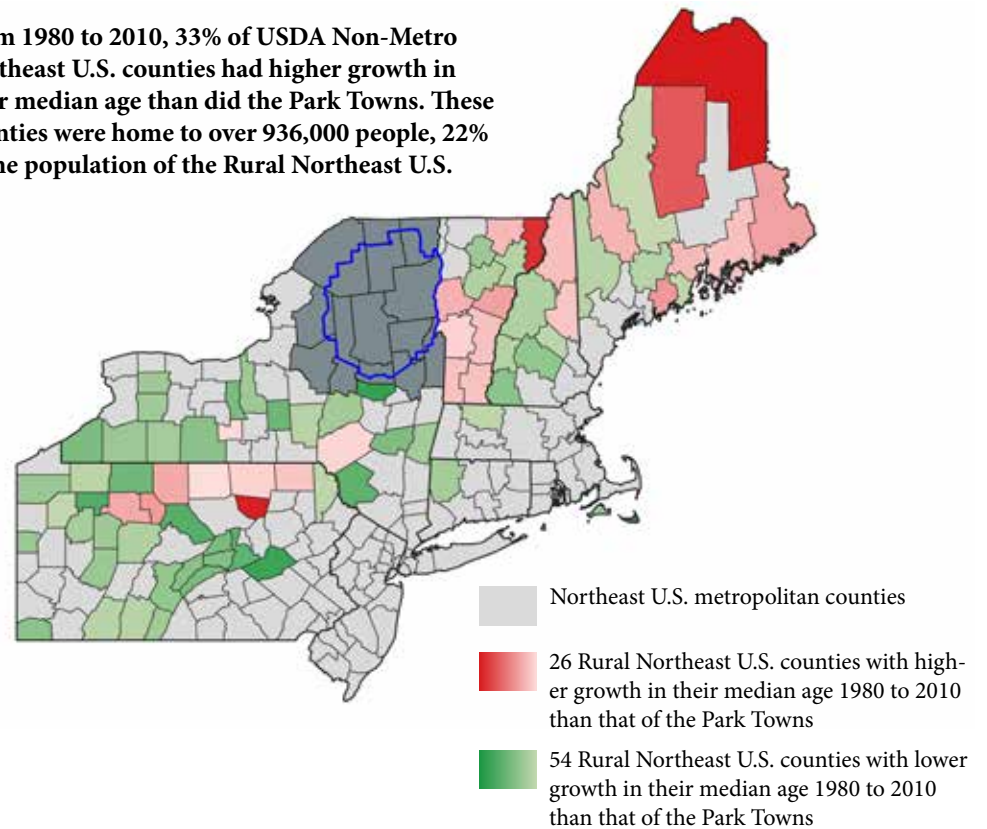
Area	1980	2010	Change
Park Towns	31.8 years	45.7 years	13.9 years
Rural America			
USDA Non-Metro U.S.	30.4	40.3	9.9
Low Density U.S.	30.6	40.5	9.9
USDA Non-Metro NE	31.4	42.9	11.5
Low Density NE	30.9	45.0	14.1

The maps on these two pages show that, regarding median age, the Park Towns are part of vast but sparsely populated Rural America. In 2010 across Rural America there were 469 counties with over 6 million people, 13% of the Rural America population, that had a higher median age than that of the 45.7 years of the Park Towns. One out of four counties in Rural America had a median age equal to or older than that of the Park Towns.

The Park Towns' high median age is exacerbated because the Adirondacks exports college-age young people, has a low birth rate, and has a high number of seniors. The Park Towns also recruit retirees, who provide many tangible benefits for Adirondack communities, but also drive up the median age. In the future it will be difficult for the Adirondacks to lower its high median age. □

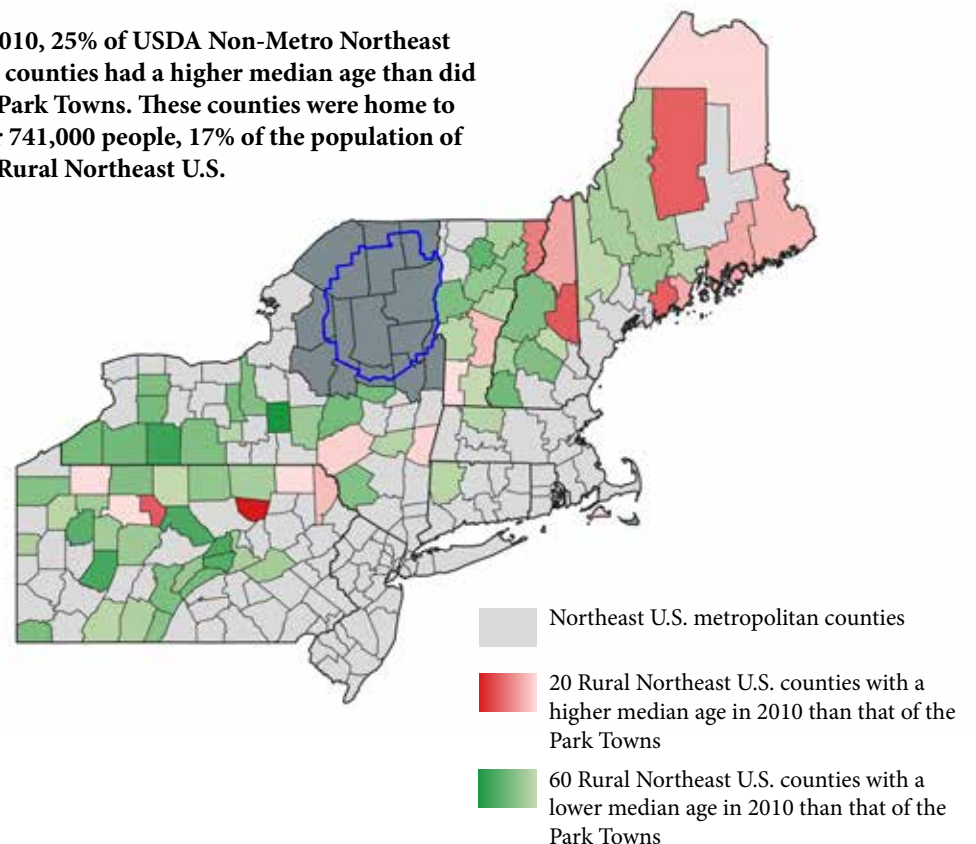
**Figure 63: Comparison of changes in median age from 1980 to 2010 between the Park Towns and the Rural Northeast U.S. counties**

From 1980 to 2010, 33% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had higher growth in their median age than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 936,000 people, 22% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.



**Figure 64: Comparison of median age in 2010 between the Park Towns and the Rural Northeast U.S. counties**

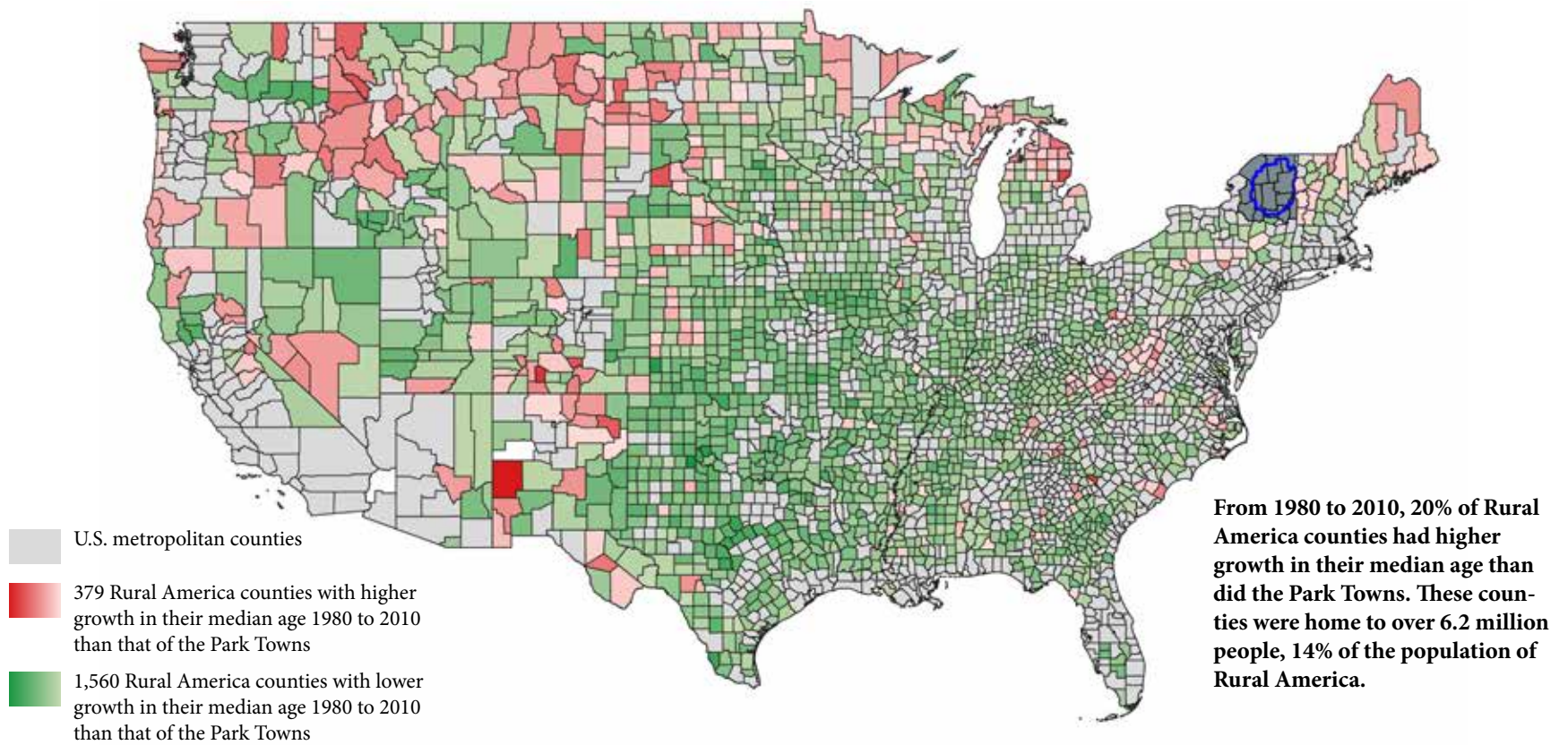
In 2010, 25% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had a higher median age than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 741,000 people, 17% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.



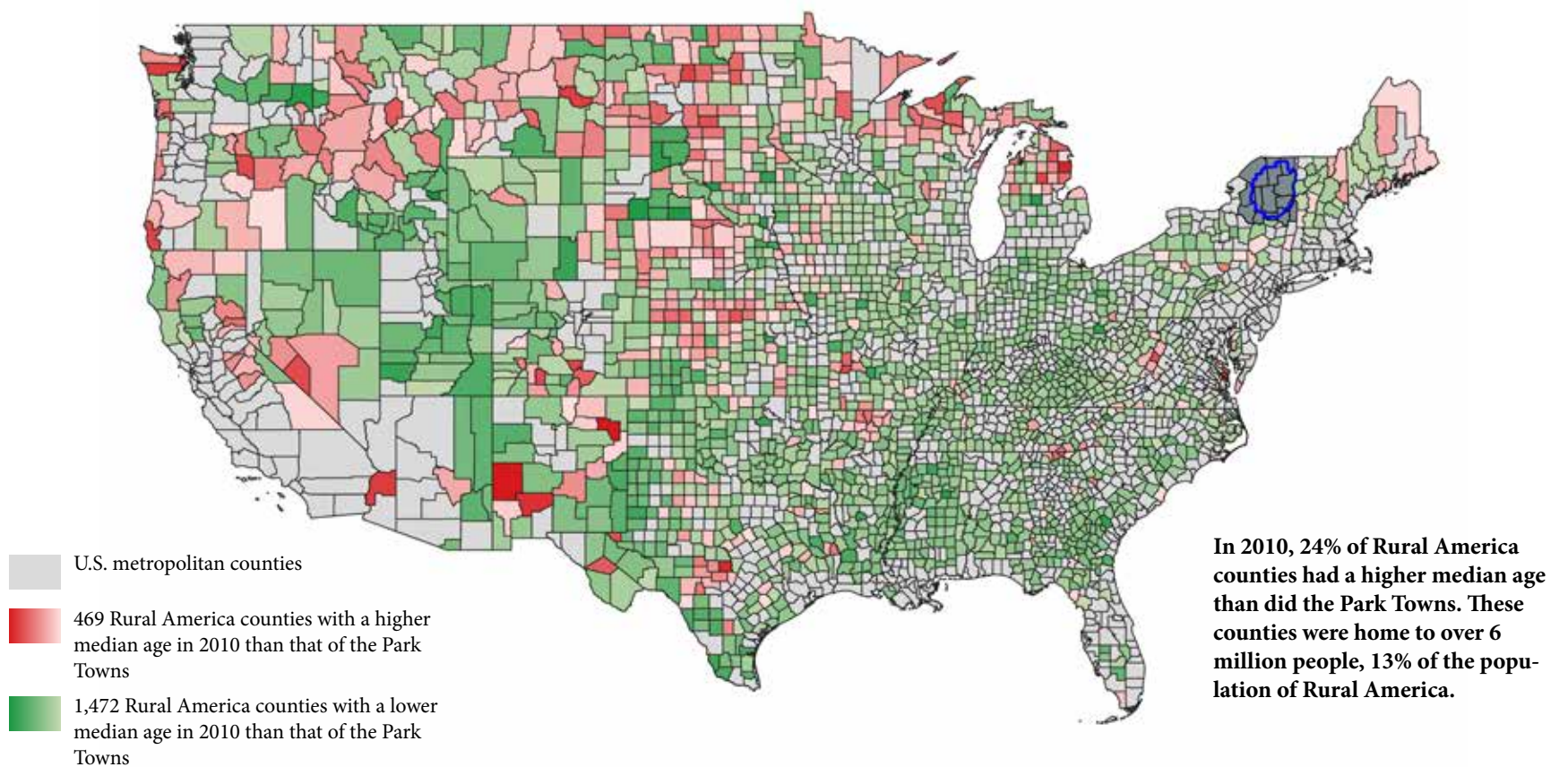


## Median Age Trends: Adirondack Park vs Rural America

**Figure 65: Comparison of changes in median age from 1980 to 2010 between the Park Towns and Rural America**



**Figure 66: Comparison of median age in 2010 between the Park Towns and Rural America**





## Ratio of Children to Adults of Childbearing Age: Adirondack Park vs New York State

### Key Findings

From 1970 to 2010, the Park Towns' ratio of children (0-14 years old) to adults of childbearing age (20 to 44 years old) decreased by 50%, greater than that of other areas.

In 2010, the Park Towns' ratio of children to adults of childbearing age was 0.57:1, similar to New York State's ratio of 0.53:1 and the U.S. ratio of 0.59:1, but lower than that of other rural areas outside the Northeast U.S.

In 2010, over 10 million New Yorkers and over 102 million Americans lived in places with a lower ratio of children to adults of childbearing age than that of the Park Towns.

**Table 17: Percent Change in the Ratio of Children to Adults of Childbearing Age in New York and the U.S., 1970–2010**

Area	1970	2010	% Change
<b>New York State</b>	<b>0.86:1</b>	<b>0.53:1</b>	<b>-38.2</b>
Rural NY Towns	1.17:1	0.65:1	-44.7
Park Towns	1.14:1	0.57:1	-50.1
Split Towns	1.02:1	0.59:1	-42.6
<b>United States</b>	<b>0.91:1</b>	<b>0.59:1</b>	<b>-35.1</b>

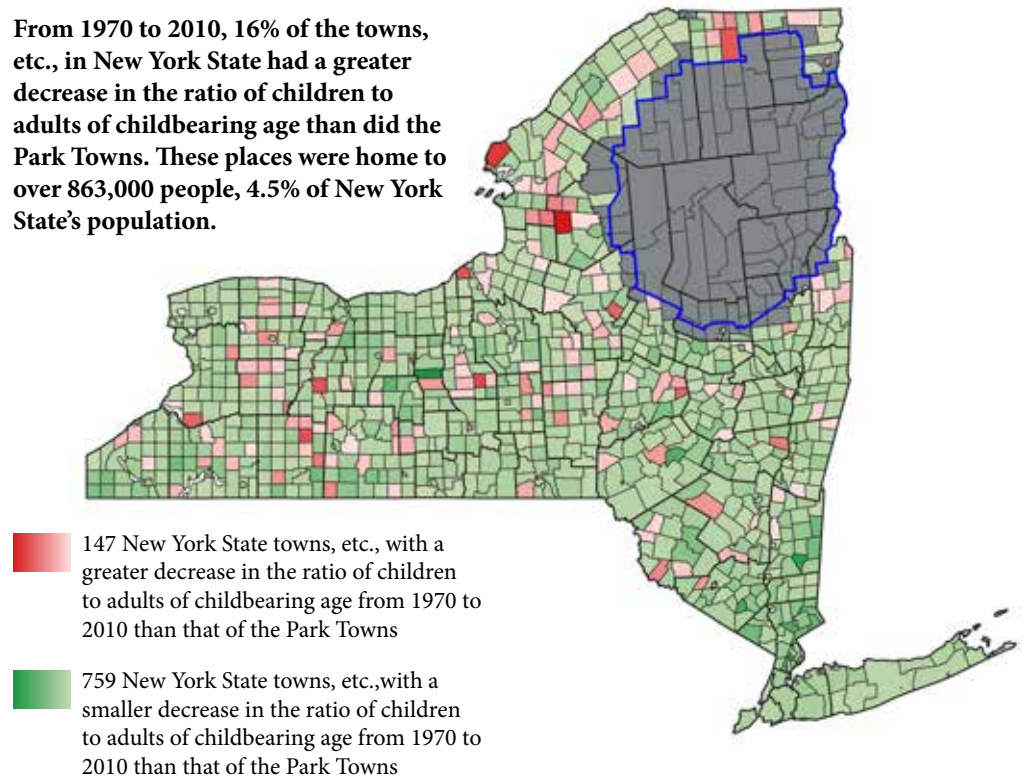
The ratio of children (0 to 14 years old) to adults of childbearing age (20 to 44 years old) provides useful information about the birth rate of a region. Birth rate trends across the U.S. from 1970 to 2010 showed a sharp decline below the ratio of 1:1 (one child per one adult).

There are two interesting things about the analysis of the ratio of children to adults of childbearing age. First, the Park Towns experienced the greatest change, from 1.14 children per adult to 0.57 children per adult (1.14:1 to 0.57:1), a 50% decline. Second, while the 2010 ratio of 0.57:1 children to adults is lower than that of other rural areas (see Tables 17 and 18), it is higher than the New York State ratio of 0.53:1 and consistent with the national ratio of 0.59:1. In this measure, the Park Towns trend more like New York State metro areas than they do with other rural areas.

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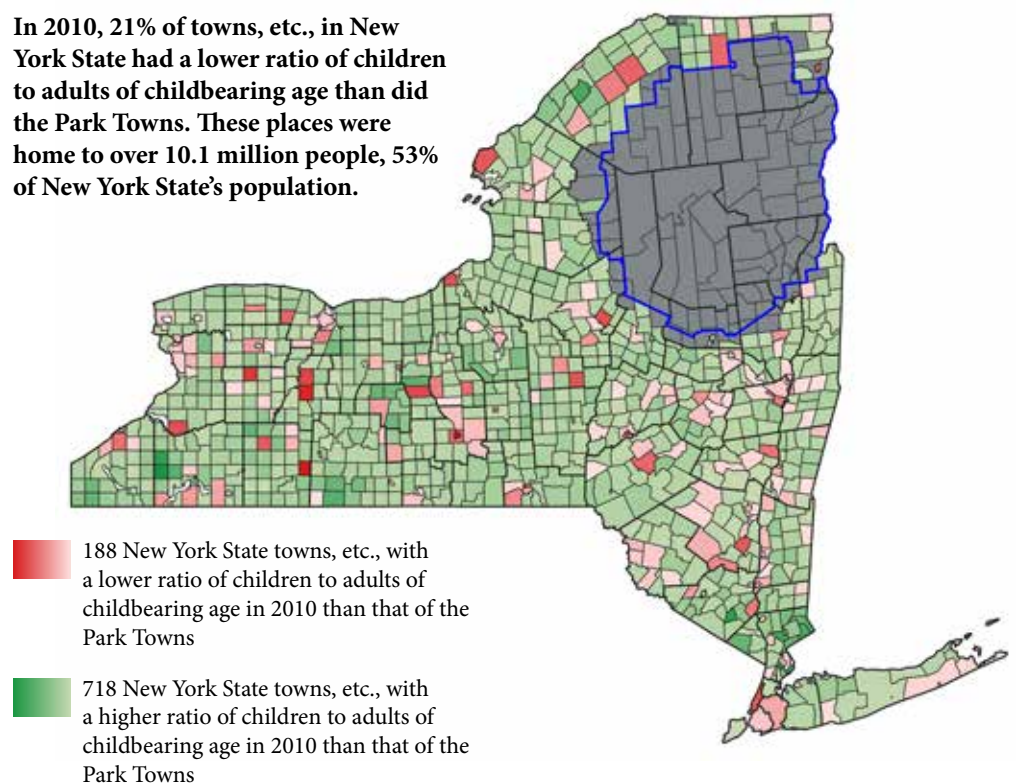
**Figure 67: Comparison of changes in the ratio of children to adults of childbearing age from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and New York State towns, cities, and boroughs**

From 1970 to 2010, 16% of the towns, etc., in New York State had a greater decrease in the ratio of children to adults of childbearing age than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 863,000 people, 4.5% of New York State's population.



**Figure 68: Comparison of the ratio of children to adults of childbearing age in 2010 between the Park Towns and New York State towns, cities, and boroughs**

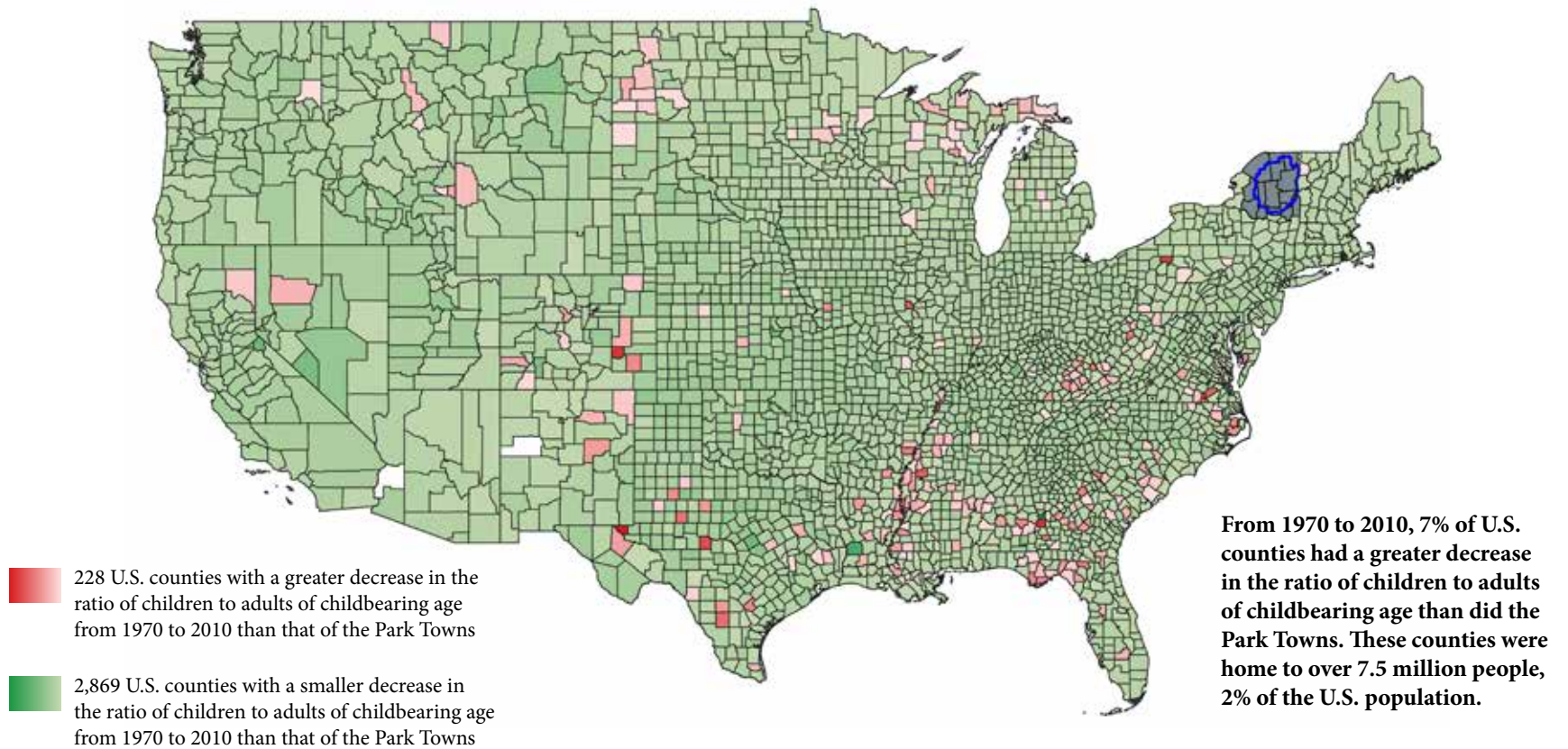
In 2010, 21% of towns, etc., in New York State had a lower ratio of children to adults of childbearing age than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 10.1 million people, 53% of New York State's population.



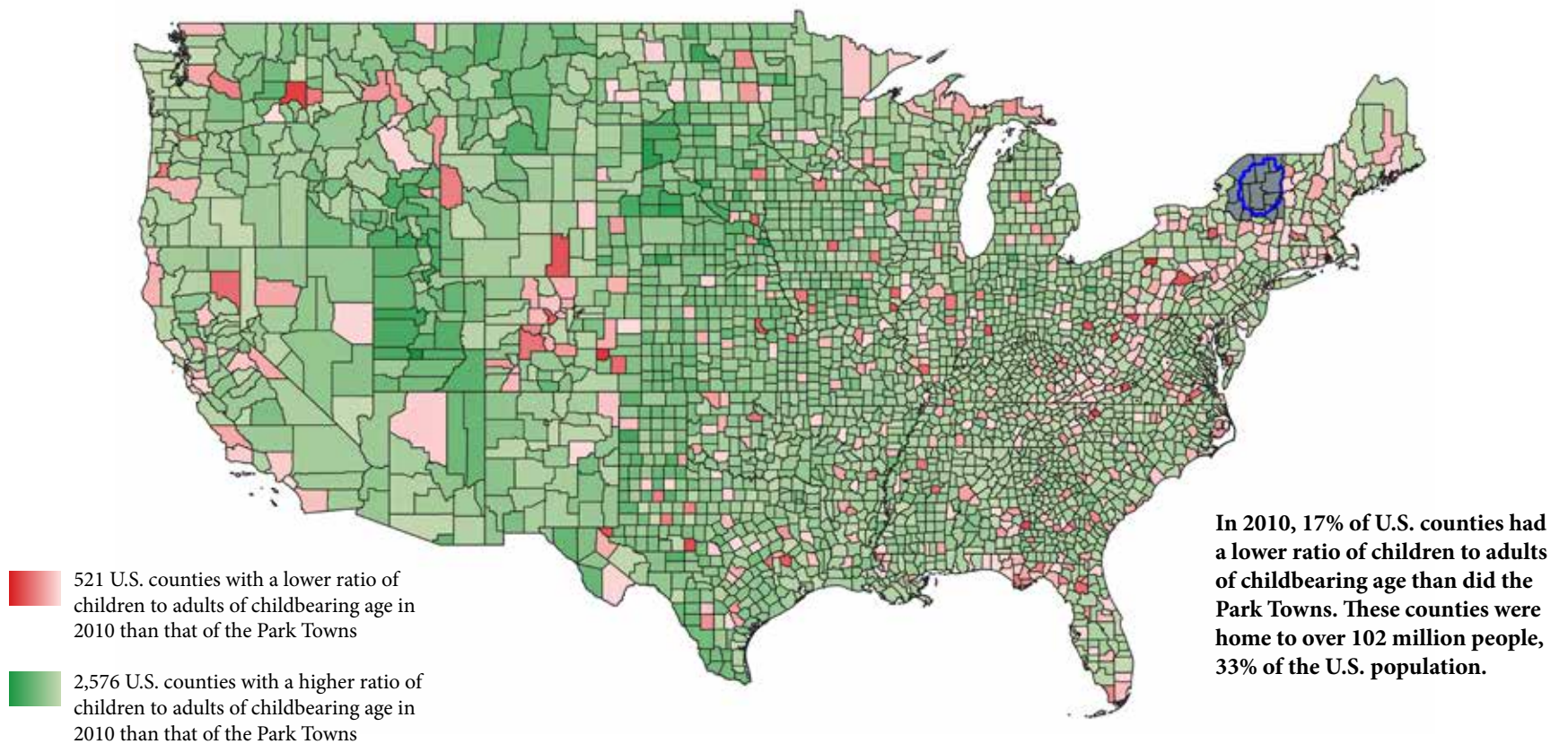


## Ratio of Children to Adults of Childbearing Age: Adirondack Park vs the United States

**Figure 69: Comparison of changes of the ratio of children to adults of childbearing age from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and U.S. counties**



**Figure 70: Comparison of the ratio of children to adults of childbearing age in 2010 between the Park Towns and U.S. counties**





## Ratio of Children to Adults of Childbearing Age: Adirondack Park vs Rural Northeast U.S.

continued from page 46

The sharp -50.1% decrease in the ratio of children to adults of childbearing age from 1970 to 2010 of the Park Towns was the largest in this study. There are few other places in the U.S. that saw such a drop. The Park Towns' ratio of children to adults of childbearing age was similar to much of Rural America's in 1970, but by 2010 it only matched New York State's and the Rural Northeast's ratio.

**Table 18: Percent Change in the Ratio of Children to Adults of Childbearing Age in Rural America, 1970–2010**

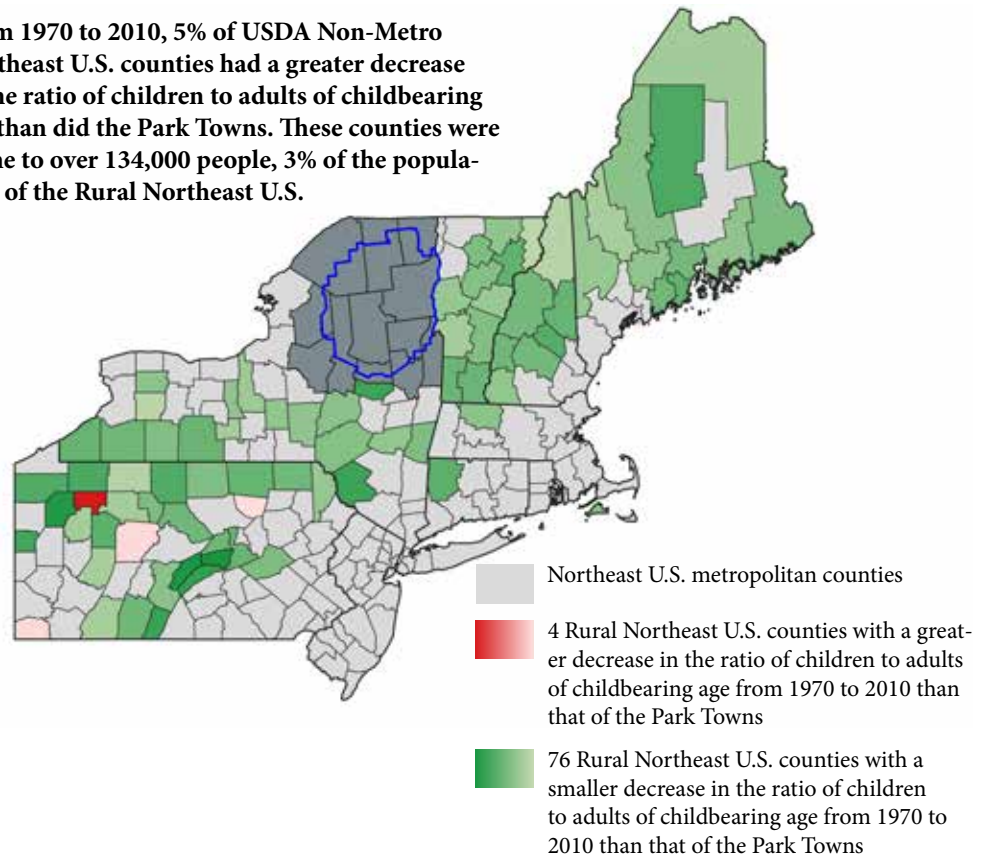
Area	1970	2010	% Change
Park Towns	1.14:1	0.57:1	-50.1
<b>Rural America</b>			
USDA Non-Metro U.S.	1.02:1	0.64:1	-37.1
Low Density U.S.	1.09:1	0.67:1	-38.0
USDA Non-Metro NE	0.97:1	0.58:1	-40.8
Low Density NE	1.04:1	0.59:1	-43.6

Why did the Park Towns have a lower ratio of children to adults of childbearing age than did other rural areas in 2010? This is a sociological question that is beyond the scope of this report. What we do know is that if the Park Towns had a ratio like other rural areas there would be more children in the Adirondacks. If the Park Towns' ratio of children to adults of childbearing age was 0.67:1 like the 1,357 Low Density U.S. counties there would have been 2,889 additional children 14 years old or younger in the Adirondacks in 2010. If the ratio was 0.64:1 like the 1,941 USDA Non-Metro counties there would be 2,046 more children.

It's important to note that in 2010 many areas across the U.S. had even lower ratios of children to adults of childbearing age than that of the Park Towns. These include places in New York with a population of over 10 million people and in the U.S. with a population of over 102 million. Historically, a low birth rate is tied to the greater availability of family planning options, a rising standard of living, and greater opportunities for women to pursue higher levels of education. A low birth rate is a common phenomenon across modern industrial societies around the world. □

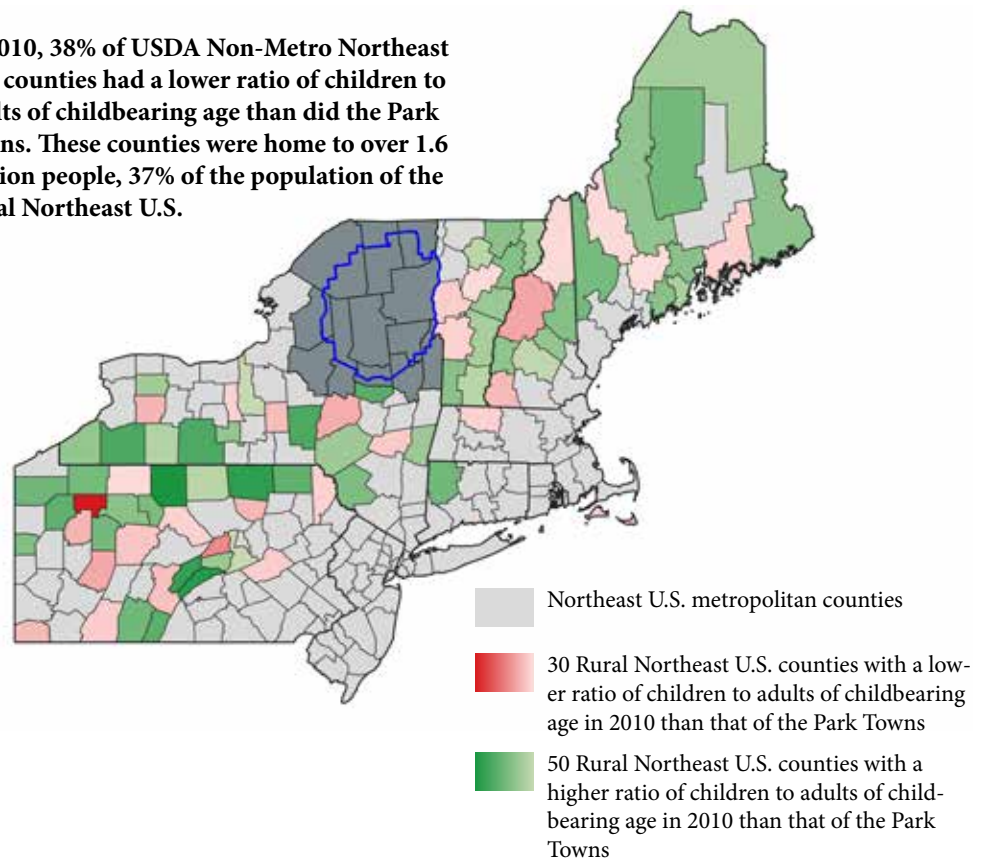
**Figure 71: Comparison of changes of the ratio of children to adults of childbearing age from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and the Rural Northeast U.S. counties**

From 1970 to 2010, 5% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had a greater decrease in the ratio of children to adults of childbearing age than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 134,000 people, 3% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.



**Figure 72: Comparison of the ratio of children to adults of childbearing age in 2010 between the Park Towns and the Rural Northeast U.S. counties**

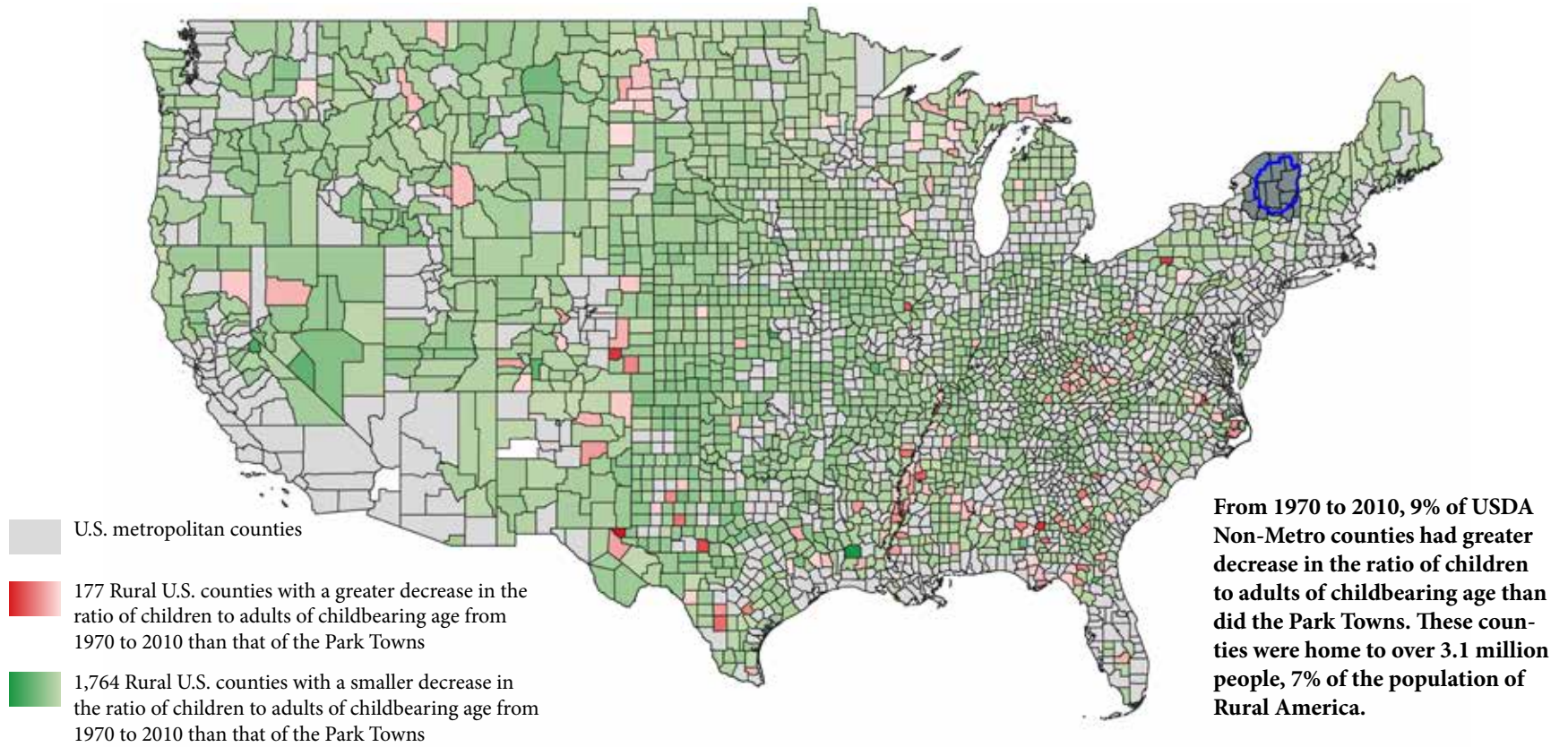
In 2010, 38% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had a lower ratio of children to adults of childbearing age than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 1.6 million people, 37% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.



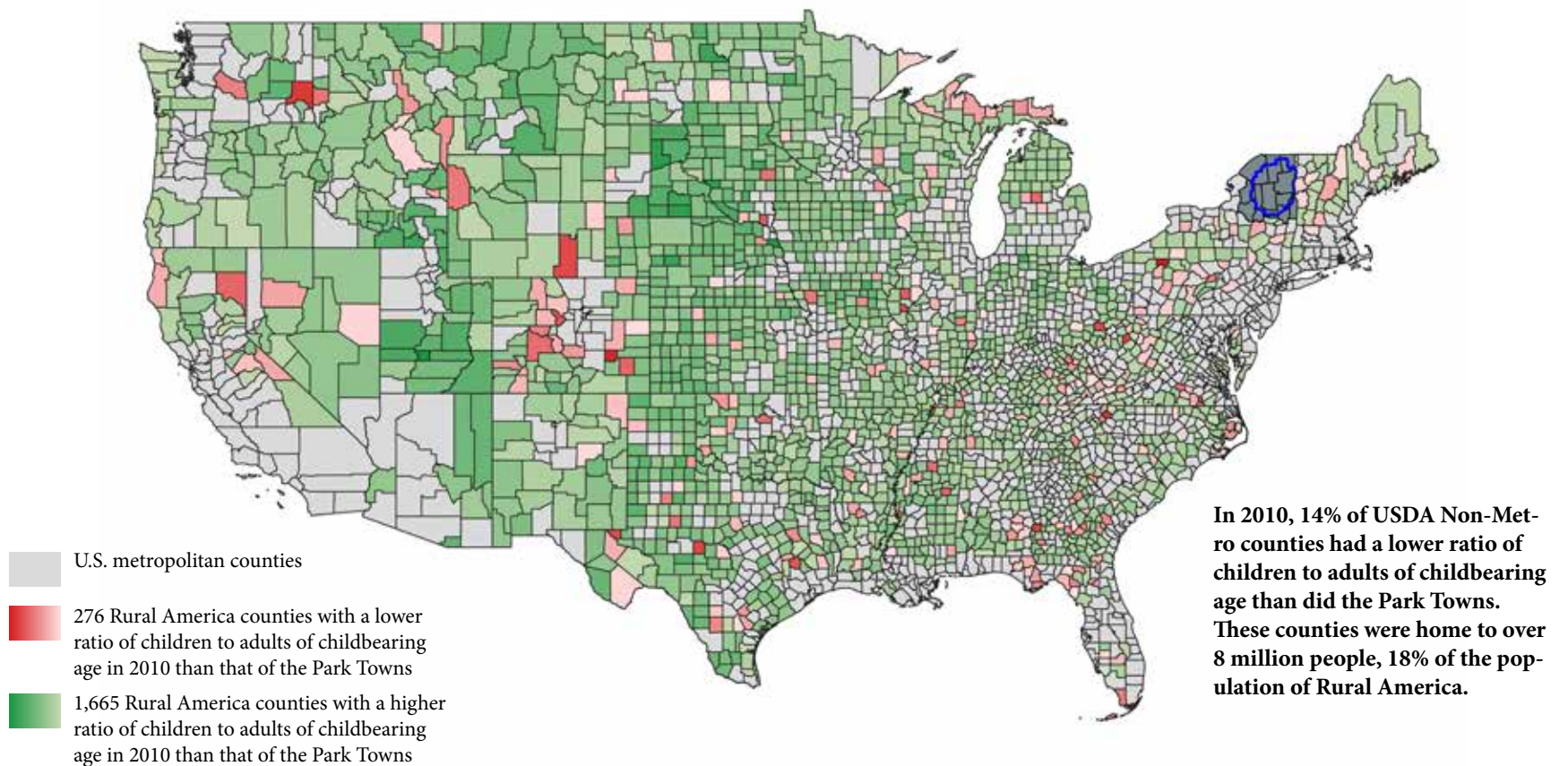


## Ratio of Children to Adults of Childbearing Age: Adirondack Park vs Rural America

**Figure 73: Comparison of changes of the ratio of children to adults of childbearing age from 1970 to 2010 between the Park Towns and Rural America**



**Figure 74: Comparison of the ratio of children to adults of childbearing age in 2010 between the Park Towns and Rural America**

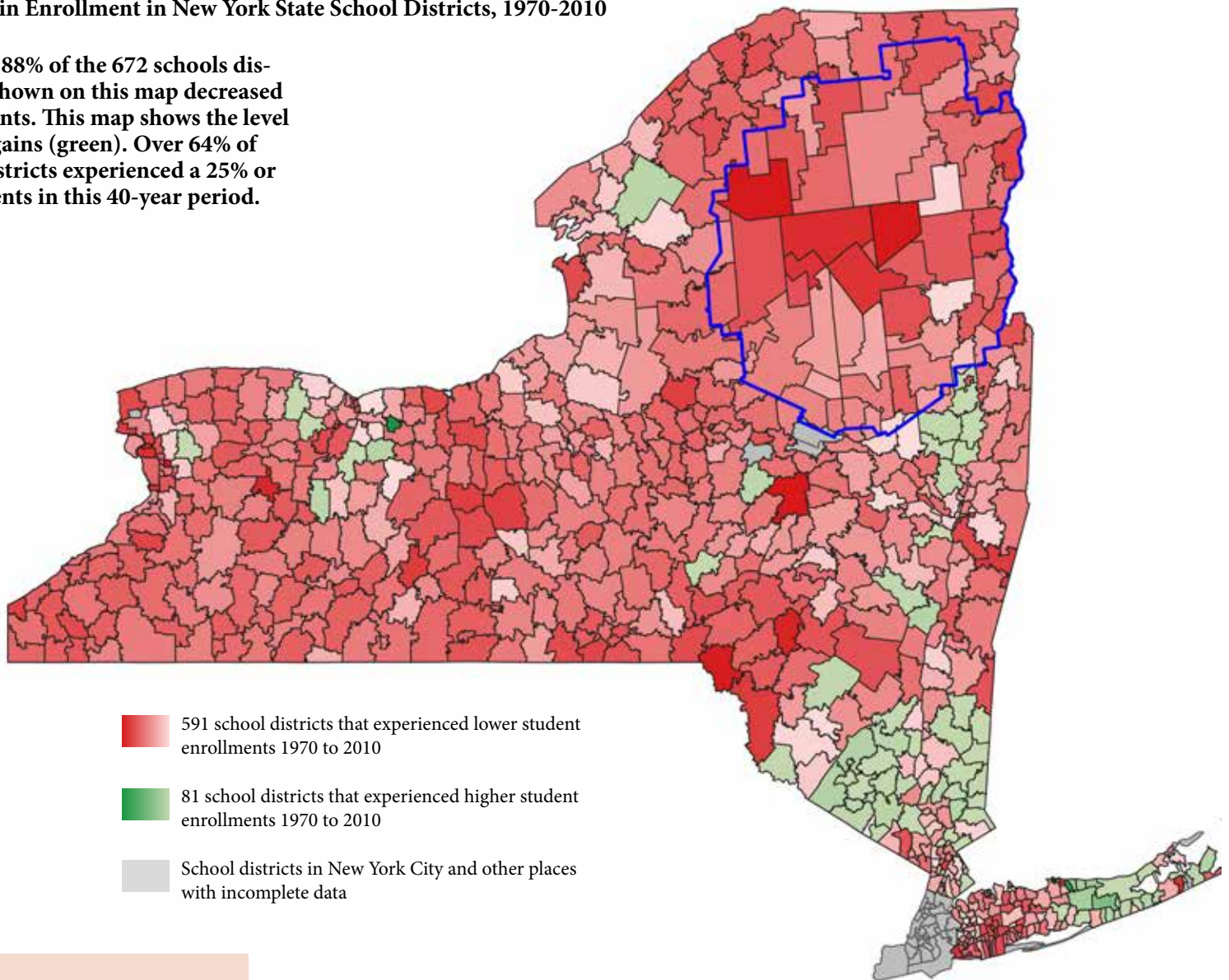




## New York State School District Enrollment Trends

**Figure 75: Changes in Enrollment in New York State School Districts, 1970-2010**

From 1970 to 2010, 88% of the 672 schools districts in New York shown on this map decreased in student enrollments. This map shows the level of losses (red) and gains (green). Over 64% of New York school districts experienced a 25% or greater loss of students in this 40-year period.



### Key Findings

From 1970 to 2010, the 672 New York State school districts we analyzed experienced a loss of 665,293 students, not including New York City. Across New York 88% of school districts in our analysis experienced decreased enrollment in those years. Over 64% of New York school districts experienced a 25% or greater loss of students.

New York's school districts experienced a loss of 25% or greater.

The New York school districts that experienced growth are largely downstate in the lower Hudson Valley and Suffolk County on Long Island. Some small cities in upstate New York gained school children in these years, such as Glens Falls, Saratoga, and the suburbs around Rochester.

Generally, school districts across upstate New York experienced decreased enrollments. Throughout the Adirondack Park all school districts experienced decreases in student enrollment in these years, from a drop of single digits in Keene and Broadalbin-Perth to drops of 71% in Newcomb,

60% in Indian Lake, and 70% in Clifton-Fine. While the enrollment losses in Adirondack school districts are serious and raise questions about the long-term viability of some schools and quality of student education with small peer groups and limited curriculum choices, the declines experienced in the Adirondacks are consistent with school districts across upstate New York. Often school enrollment numbers in the Adirondacks are held up as evidence of negative impacts from environmental controls. While such views are popular, they fail to take into account the long-standing statewide trend of declining enrollments in school districts across upstate New York. □



## Population Trends by Age Groups



So far in this report, U.S. Census data have shown that the population in Adirondack Park Towns grew more than did New York State's, though it lagged behind most other similar rural areas. While these comparisons to state and national trends are useful, they do not tell the full story about what's happening inside Adirondack population trends from 1970 to 2010.

There are a number of questions that course through Adirondack political debates about population losses or gains. One of the best tools to investigate and answer these questions is through an analysis of different age groups that tracks their experiences decade after decade as they age. This kind of age group analysis of the Adirondack population has never been done before.

There are many questions about population trends in the Adirondack Park that age group analysis can address. Has the Adirondacks been losing its young people? Is the experience of young people in the Adirondacks different from that in other rural areas? How many young people chose to stay in the Adirondacks or moved here? Is the number of young people that the Adirondacks retains or recruits simi-

**Table 19: The Six Age Groups**

Birth Year Range	Age Group Name
1936–1945	Pre-Baby Boom
1946–1955	Classic Baby Boom
1956–1965	Late Baby Boom
1966–1975	Generation X
1976–1985	Pre-Millennials
1986–1995	Millennials

lar to or different from that in other rural areas?

Other important questions include: Are young families leaving the Adirondacks? Is the experience of young families in the Adirondacks different from that in other rural areas? Are career age people between 35 to 55 years old moving to the Adirondacks? Are career age people moving to other rural areas? Is the Adirondack Park recruiting retirees or exporting them? Are retirees moving to other rural areas?

These questions can be answered by tracking the experiences of different age groups in a region as they are born, finish school, go off to college or the military, start working, raise families, settle into middle age, and retire.

On the following pages we separate the population of the Adirondacks, New York, the U.S., and Rural America into six groups based on their birth years. The first age group is composed of people born between 1936 and 1945. The last cohort comprises people born between 1986 and 1995. We have assigned each age group a commonly used nickname for ease of reference in the discussion that follows; see Table 19 on the left.

We examine the population of each age group at the end of each decade, from 1970 to 2010. For example, when we first meet them in 1970, the pre-Baby Boom age group is 25 to 34 years old and focused on starting careers and families. By 1990, they are settling into middle age and by 2010 they have earned the title “seniors.” In each decade, some people in this age group die or move away and are “lost” to the group. Meanwhile, some new people of that age move into the region and as such are “recruited” to that area’s age group. Tables 20 to 25 on the following pages show these population changes, both gains and losses, in raw numbers for each of the six age groups for each of the nine geographical areas we’ve been comparing in this report. □



## Population Trends of the Pre-Baby Boom Age Group 1970 to 2010

### Key Findings

The Park Towns' pre-Baby Boom age group experienced an 11.5% population increase from 1970 to 2010. This was a larger increase than that of all other rural areas.

The pre-Baby Boom age group across the U.S. experienced a 12.4% loss, due to mortality, while the New York State group experienced an even bigger 39.6% loss due to mortality and people leaving the state.

The Park Towns recruited over 1,000 career age people at 35 years old and almost 1,000 people of retirement age at 55 years old.

**Table 20: Population changes in the pre-Baby Boom age group (born between 1936 and 1945) in nine study regions from 1970 to 2010**

Areas	1970 25-34	1980 35-44	1990 45-54	2000 55-64	2010 65-74	Change 1970-2010
New York State	2,249,835	2,045,870	1,943,438	1,679,550	1,359,884	-39.6%
Rural NY Towns	5,930	6,326	6,104	6,582	5,617	-5.3%
Park Towns	9,518	10,646	10,579	11,553	10,617	11.5%
Split Towns	11,517	12,419	12,307	11,913	10,479	-9.0%
United States	24,534,121	25,369,027	25,201,902	23,927,917	21,496,477	-12.4%
Rural America						
USDA Non-Metro	3,870,257	4,257,372	4,141,931	4,311,487	3,988,882	3.1%
Low Density US	1,654,687	1,855,229	1,796,667	1,928,303	1,820,560	10.0%
USDA Non-Metro NE	404,640	434,965	427,100	424,148	381,150	-5.8%
Low Density NE	47,669	52,271	51,636	53,148	50,139	5.2%

Table 20 shows that the Park Towns' pre-Baby Boom age group grew by 11.5% from 1970 to 2010 through recruitment of new residents. The Park Towns gained population through recruitment of young adults in 1980 and nearly 1,000 people of retirement age in 2000. At this same time, New York State lost 39.6% of its pre-Baby Boom age group due to mortality or people moving out of the state. The U.S. saw a 12.4% loss, driven by mortality or people leaving the country. Green shaded boxes represent growth relative to the previous decade. Red shaded boxes show losses.

**Figure 76: Population changes in the pre-Baby Boom age group (born between 1936 and 1945) in nine study regions from 1970 to 2010**

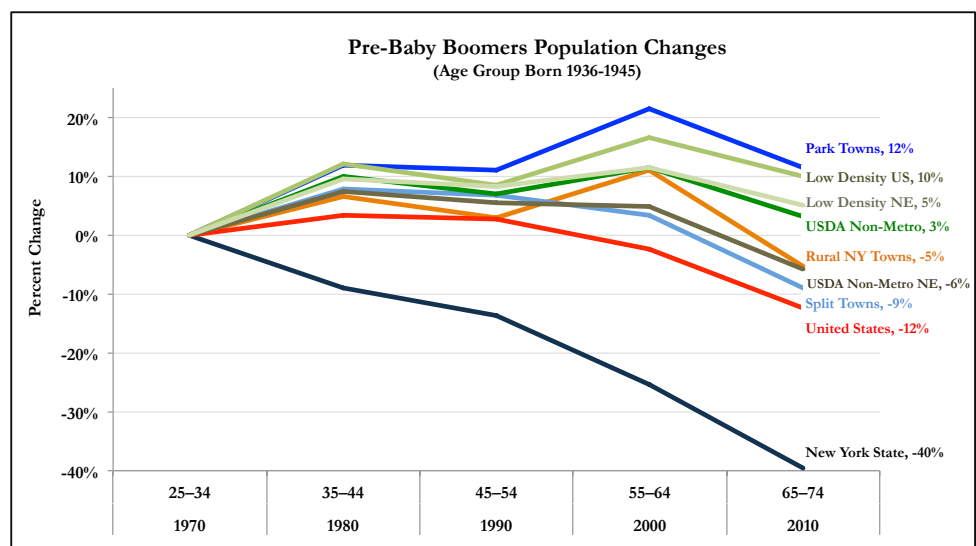


Figure 76 shows in a line graph the population gains or losses of the pre-Baby Boom age group across nine different regions from 1970 to 2010.

The maps on the right show that the pre-Baby Boomers in the Park Towns enjoyed higher population recruitment than did New York State or Rural America.

Another interesting trend is that the pre-Baby Boomer age group showed a

strong interest in retiring to rural areas, starting around 2000 at age 55. The Park Towns saw the largest recruitment of retirees, yet almost all the rural areas saw growth from people of retirement age. □

The first age group is the pre-Baby Boomers, who were born between 1936 and 1945. This group was 25 to 34 years old in 1970 and 65 to 74 in 2010. The experiences of this group among the nine different geographic areas analyzed in this report differed widely; see Table 20 above.

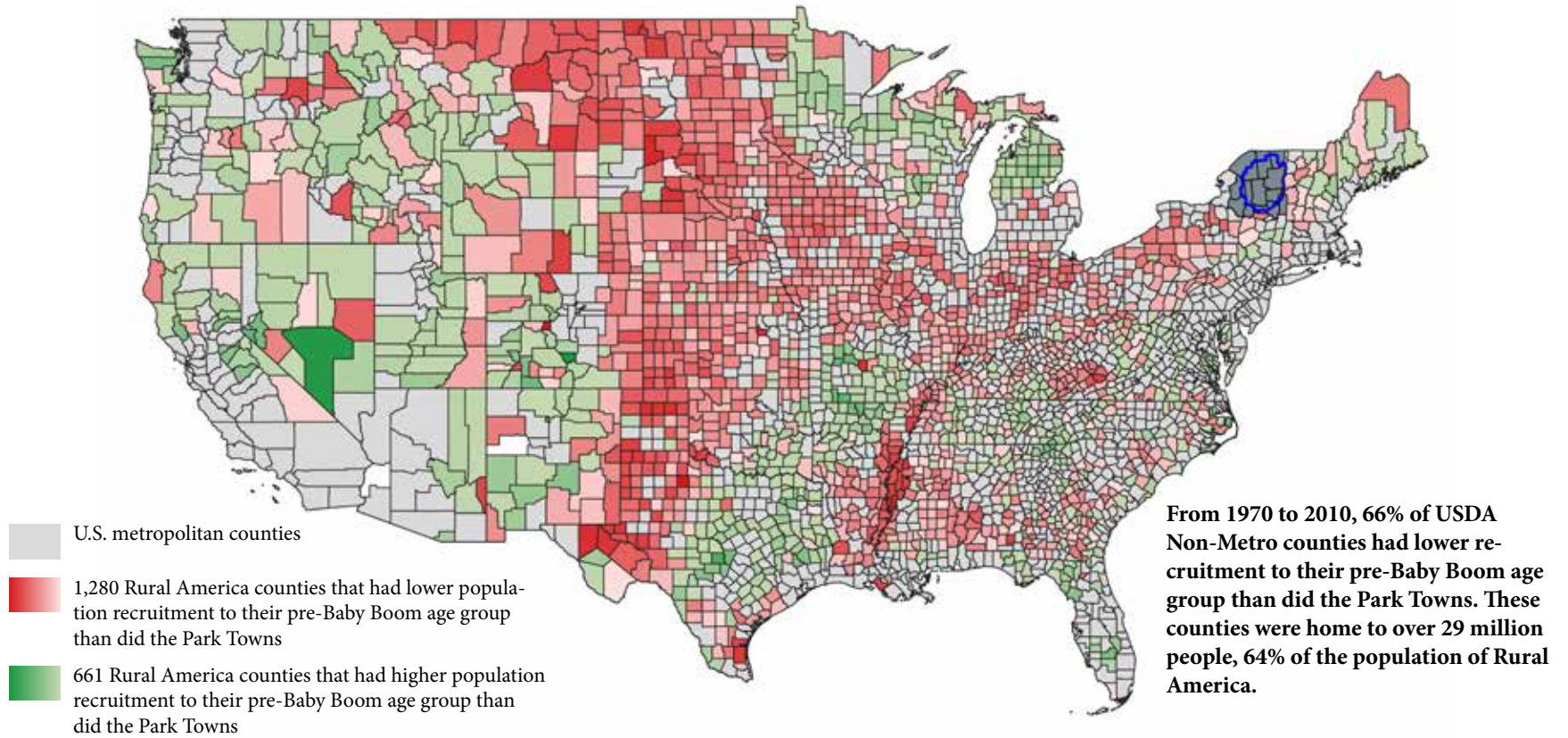
The Park Towns' pre-Baby Boom age group increased in population in almost every decade, growing a total of 11.5% after 40 years. When we first have data about this group at ages 25 to 34 in 1970, they are beyond college age. We do not have information about lost college age young people in this time period. What we do know is that the Park Towns' pre-Baby Boom age group grew more than it did in the eight other study areas. Most other rural areas in this age group gained population, but at lower rates than the Park Towns.

The Split Towns' group shrank by -9%. The U.S. dropped by -12.4% and New York State dropped by a staggering -39.6%. It's important to note that the New York State pre-Baby Boom age group experienced population loss every decade 1970 to 2010.



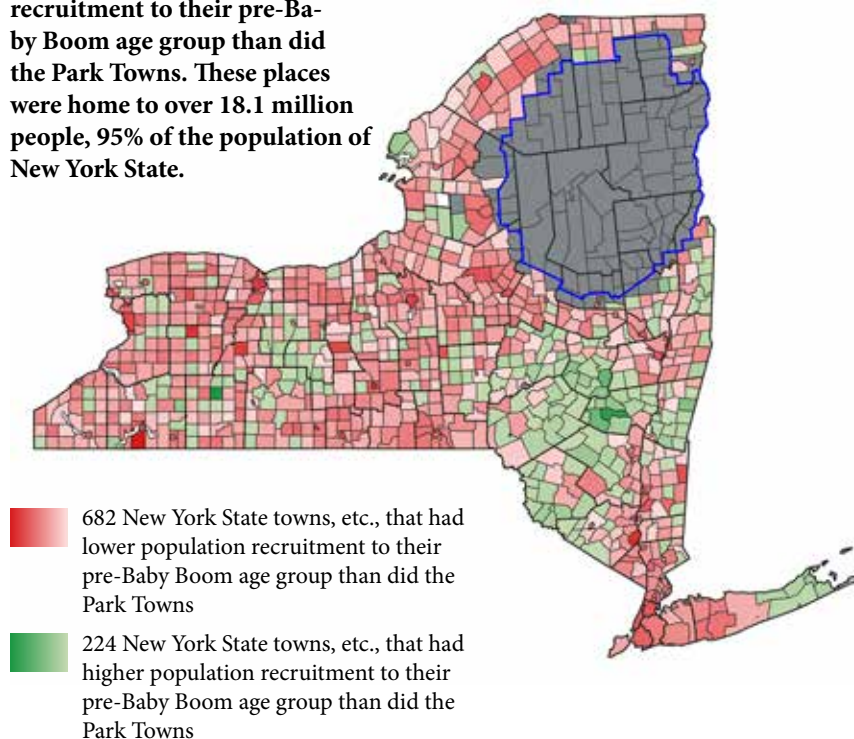
## Population Trends of the Pre-Baby Boom Age Group 1970 to 2010

**Figure 77: Comparison of population recruitment of the pre-Baby Boom age group between the Park Towns and Rural America from 1970 to 2010**



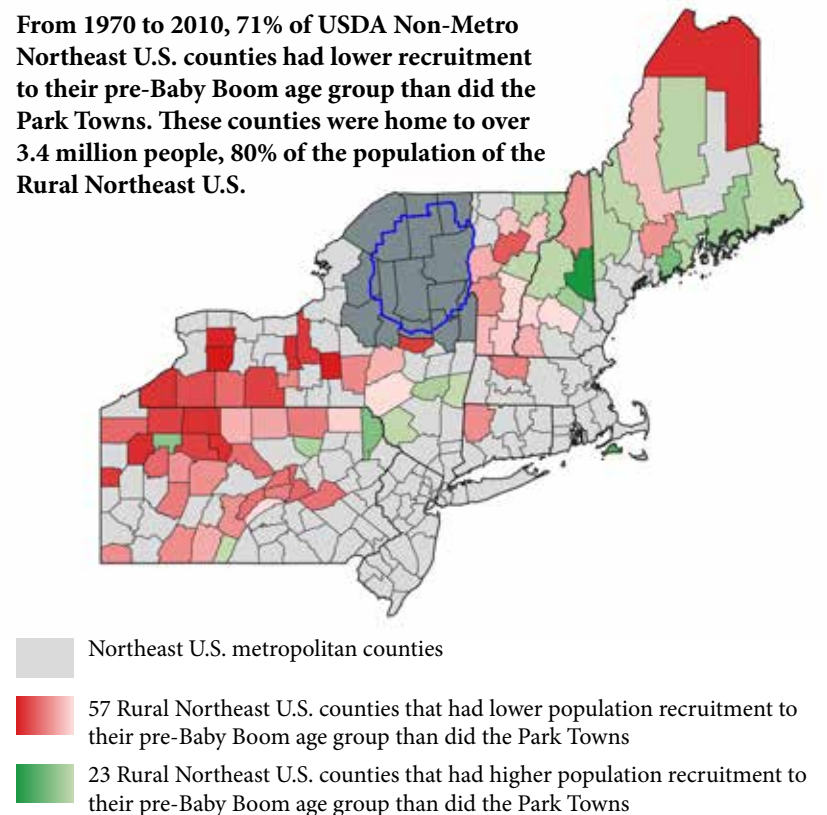
**Figure 78: Comparison of population recruitment of the pre-Baby Boom age group between the Park Towns and New York State from 1970 to 2010**

From 1970 to 2010, 75% of New York State towns, etc., had lower recruitment to their pre-Baby Boom age group than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 18.1 million people, 95% of the population of New York State.



**Figure 79: Comparison of population recruitment of the pre-Baby Boom age group between the Park Towns and Rural Northeast U.S. from 1970 to 2010**

From 1970 to 2010, 71% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had lower recruitment to their pre-Baby Boom age group than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 3.4 million people, 80% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.





## Population Trends of the Classic Baby Boom Age Group 1970 to 2010

### Key Findings

The Park Towns' Classic Baby Boom age group experienced a 15.9% population increase from 1970 to 2010, higher than all but one other region.

The Classic Baby Boom age group across the U.S. experienced a growth rate of 2.9%, compared with the New York State decline of -21.9%.

The Park Towns saw a population drop with the loss of college-age young adults. The Park Towns gained population with recruitment of young career age adults after age 35 and retirees after age 55.

The next age group, born between 1946 and 1955, is the Classic Baby Boomers. They were teenagers and young adults 15 to 24 years old at the beginning of our study in 1970 and were nearing retirement in 2010 at ages 55 to 64. In the Park Towns and Split Towns, the Classic Baby Boomers posted a 40-year gain of 15.9% and 5.8%, respectively. See Table 21 above.

Most rural areas saw small changes in this age group. The Rural NY towns grew at 18.9%, the Low Density U.S. counties grew at 5.6%, but the USDA Non-Metro U.S. counties did not grow.

In New York State, the Classic Baby Boomer age group shrank in every decade from 1970 to 2010, going down as fast as the Park Towns went up. The New York State age group dropped by -21.9%. Across the U.S., this age group grew modestly at 2.9%, but dropped significantly after age 55 due to natural decline. The overall national growth for this age group was due to recruitment of immigrants from abroad.

This age group in the three New York regions all showed growth at age 35, growing much more than other rural areas. The

**Table 21: Population changes in the Classic Baby Boom age group (born between 1946 and 1955) in nine study regions from 1970 to 2010**

Areas	1970 15-24	1980 25-34	1990 35-44	2000 45-54	2010 55-64	Change 1970-2010
<b>New York State</b>	2,947,191	2,784,682	2,718,279	2,553,647	2,302,349	-21.9%
<b>Rural NY Towns</b>	7,610	7,839	8,779	8,923	9,051	18.9%
<b>Park Towns</b>	14,097	13,587	14,704	15,448	16,336	15.9%
<b>Split Towns</b>	16,579	17,116	18,515	17,899	17,534	5.8%
<b>United States</b>	35,069,170	36,769,892	37,194,160	37,173,670	36,086,653	2.9%
<b>Rural America</b>						
<b>USDA Non-Metro</b>	6,034,544	5,868,253	5,711,489	5,958,114	6,033,297	-0.0%
<b>Low Density US</b>	2,575,963	2,563,002	2,476,506	2,633,475	2,719,677	5.6%
<b>USDA Non-Metro NE</b>	607,361	605,189	623,446	624,693	619,521	2.0%
<b>Low Density NE</b>	73,695	71,010	73,271	72,891	76,640	4.0%

Table 21 shows that the Park Towns' Classic Baby Boom age group grew by 15.9% from 1970 to 2010 through recruitment of new residents. The Park Towns saw a loss of college-age young people in 1980. This will become a trend in all age groups that follow. The Park Towns recruited career age people and retirees. The Classic Baby Boom age group saw population recruitment across all rural areas. The Rural New York Towns saw the greatest gains at 18.9%, while other rural areas were flat or saw modest gains. At the same time, New York State experienced a -21.9% drop in its population in this age group as people moved out of state. The U.S. saw a 2.9% gain in this age group due to immigration from abroad.

**Figure 80: Population changes in the Classic Baby Boom age group (born between 1946 and 1955) in nine study regions from 1970 to 2010**

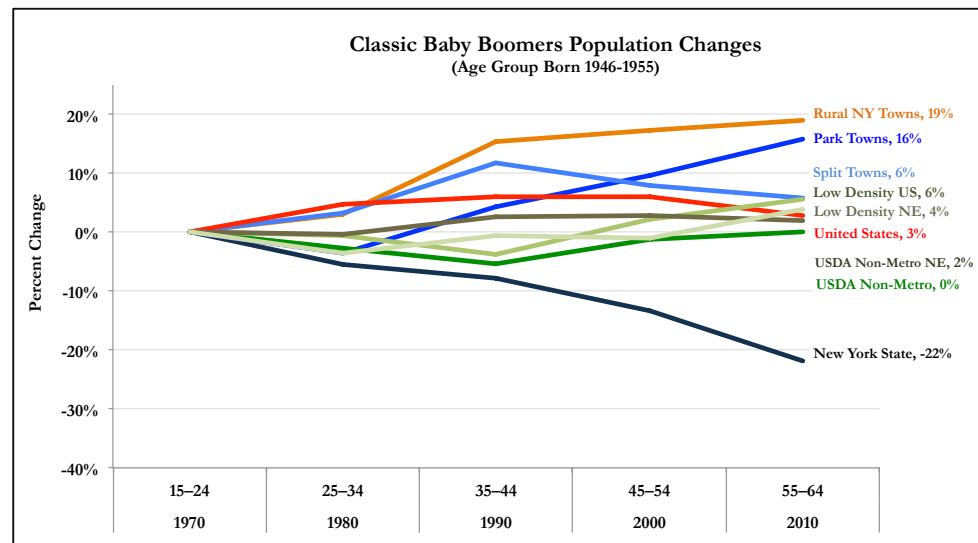


Figure 80 shows in a line graph the population gains or losses of the Classic Baby Boom age group across nine different regions from 1970 to 2010.

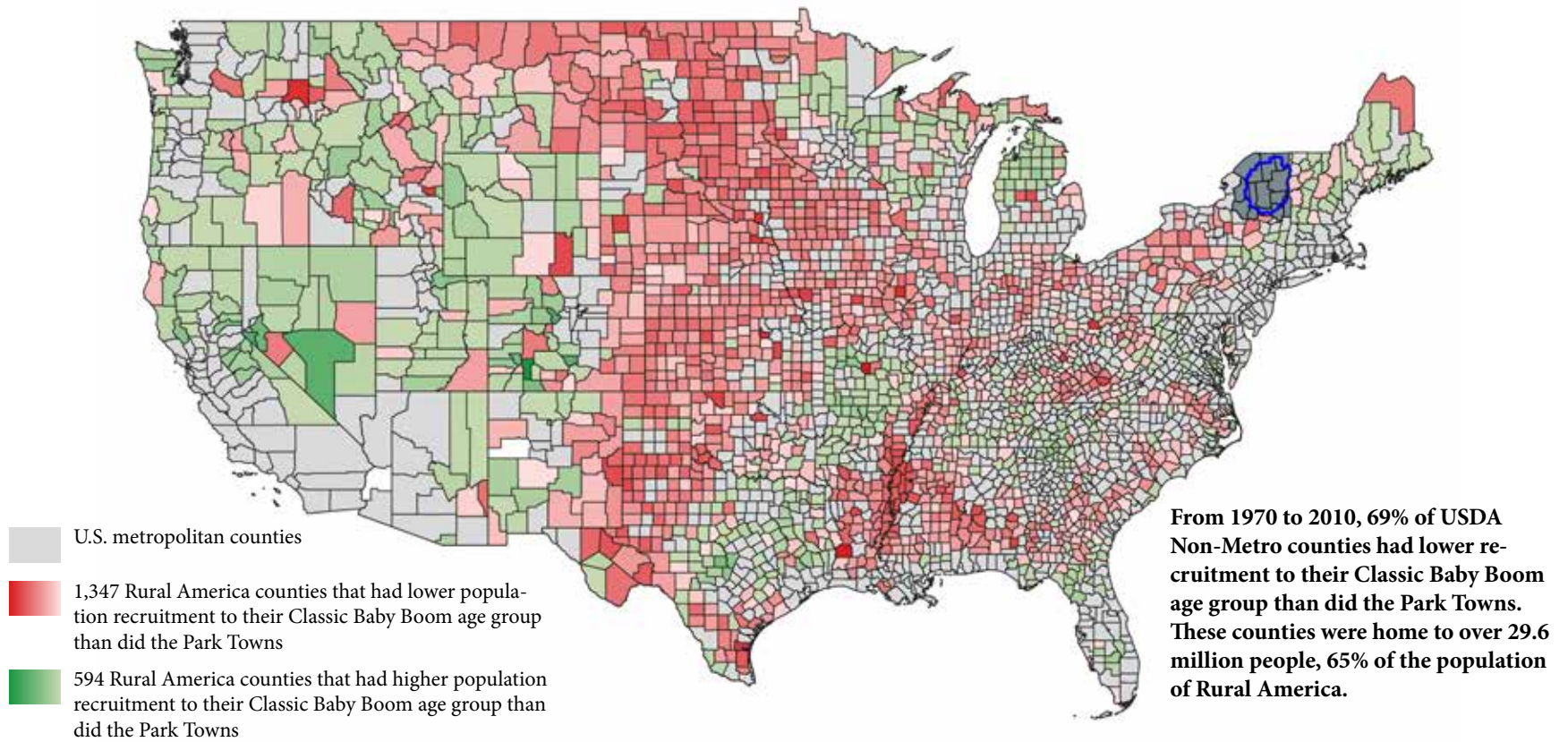
Park Towns stand out from other areas in their recruitment of retirees, picking up almost 900 people. Other rural areas saw minor growth in people of retirement age. The maps on the right show that the rate

of growth of the Classic Baby Boomers age group in the Park Towns was better than vast areas of New York State, the rural Northeast U.S., and Rural America. □



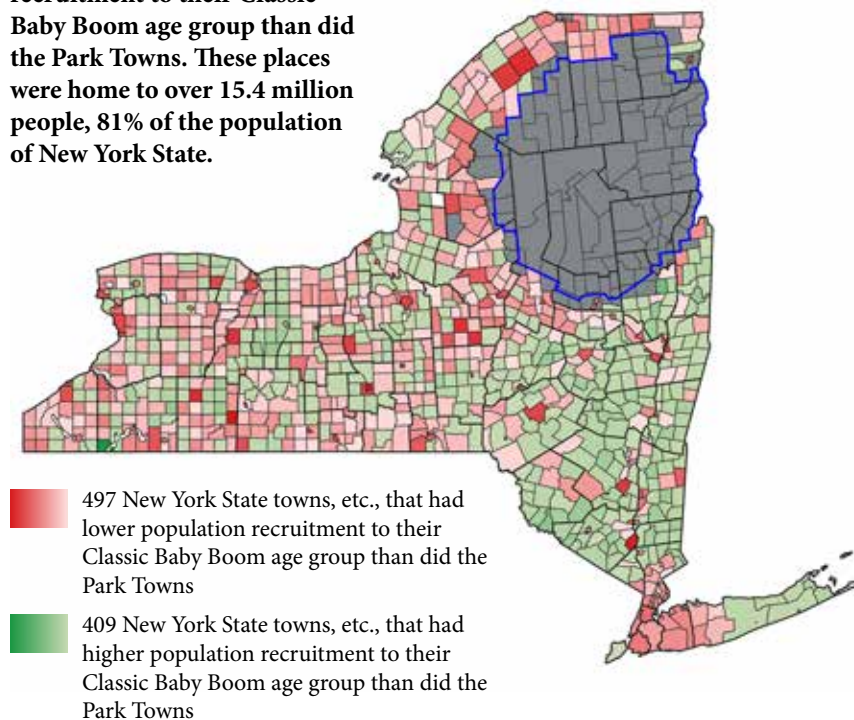
## Population Trends of the Classic Baby Boom Age Group 1970 to 2010

**Figure 81: Comparison of population recruitment of the Classic Baby Boom age group between the Park Towns and Rural America from 1970 to 2010**



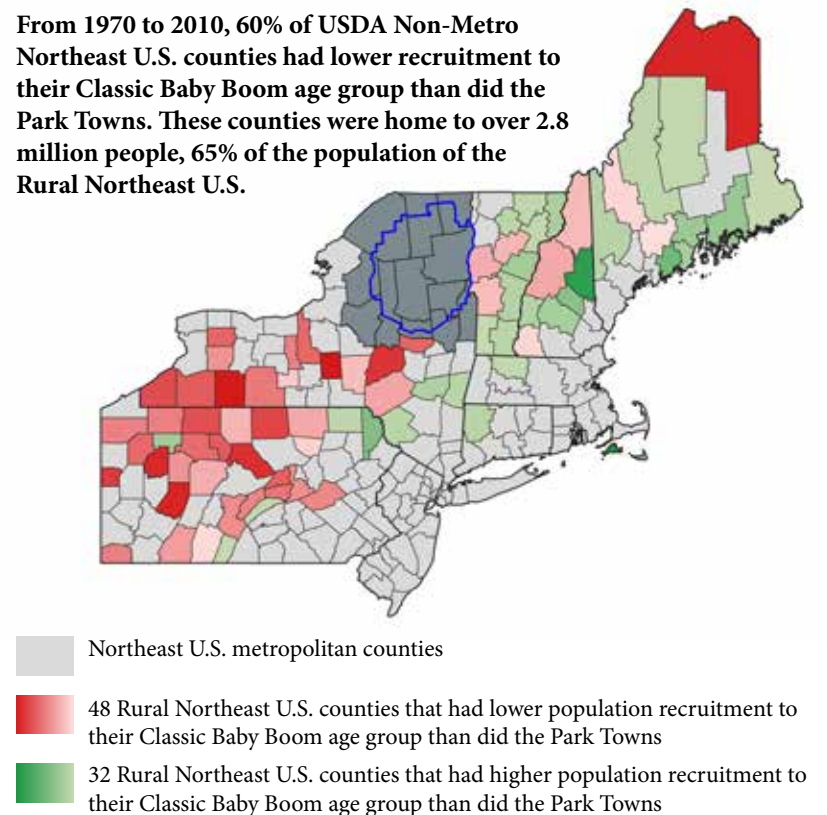
**Figure 82: Comparison of population recruitment of the Classic Baby Boom age group between the Park Towns and New York State from 1970 to 2010**

From 1970 to 2010, 55% of New York State towns, etc., had lower recruitment to their Classic Baby Boom age group than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 15.4 million people, 81% of the population of New York State.



**Figure 83: Comparison of population recruitment of the Classic Baby Boom age group between the Park Towns and Rural Northeast U.S. from 1970 to 2010**

From 1970 to 2010, 60% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had lower recruitment to their Classic Baby Boom age group than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 2.8 million people, 65% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.





## Population Trends of the Late Baby Boom Age Group 1970 to 2010

### Key Findings

The Park Towns' Late Baby Boom age group experienced a -9.4% population loss from 1970 to 2010. All rural areas lost population among the Late Baby Boom age group.

The Late Baby Boom age group across the U.S. experienced a growth rate of 10.2%, compared with the New York State decline of -15.7%.

The Park Towns recruited over 2,000 career age adults after age 35, but these gains did not recoup the earlier loss of more than 4,000 young people of college age.

**Table 22: Population changes in the Late Baby Boom age group (born between 1956 and 1965) in nine study regions from 1970 to 2010**

Areas	1970 5-14	1980 15-24	1990 25-34	2000 35-44	2010 45-54	Change 1970-2010
<b>New York State</b>	3,411,813	3,115,728	3,145,291	3,125,441	2,876,419	-15.7%
<b>Rural NY Towns</b>	11,676	9,505	9,082	10,078	10,466	-10.4%
<b>Park Towns</b>	19,597	17,914	15,434	16,932	17,754	-9.4%
<b>Split Towns</b>	21,021	20,001	21,239	21,135	21,778	3.6%
<b>United States</b>	40,404,539	42,015,077	42,985,625	45,429,800	44,539,951	10.2%
<b>Rural America</b>						
<b>USDA Non-Metro</b>	7,257,790	7,243,741	6,068,559	6,692,935	6,710,999	-7.5%
<b>Low Density US</b>	3,336,921	3,142,844	2,619,442	2,962,172	2,991,329	-10.4%
<b>USDA Non-Metro NE</b>	724,486	720,810	637,245	678,030	692,103	-4.5%
<b>Low Density NE</b>	93,475	86,564	75,604	76,680	81,147	-13.2%

Table 22 shows that the Park Towns' Late Baby Boom age group saw a 9.4% population loss from 1970 to 2010 from residents leaving the area. While the Park Towns saw an overall population loss in this age group, it still recruited over 2,000 career age people over age 35 by 2010. The Split Towns gained 3.6%. This period marks a change for rural areas, which all posted population losses, ranging from -4.5% to major losses of -13.2%. All rural areas saw a loss of college-age young people, some modest, others quite severe. While rural areas recruited people after age 35, they never recouped their losses of college-age young people. New York State also continued to lose population.

**Figure 84: Population changes in the Late Baby Boom age group (born between 1956 and 1965) in nine study regions from 1970 to 2010**

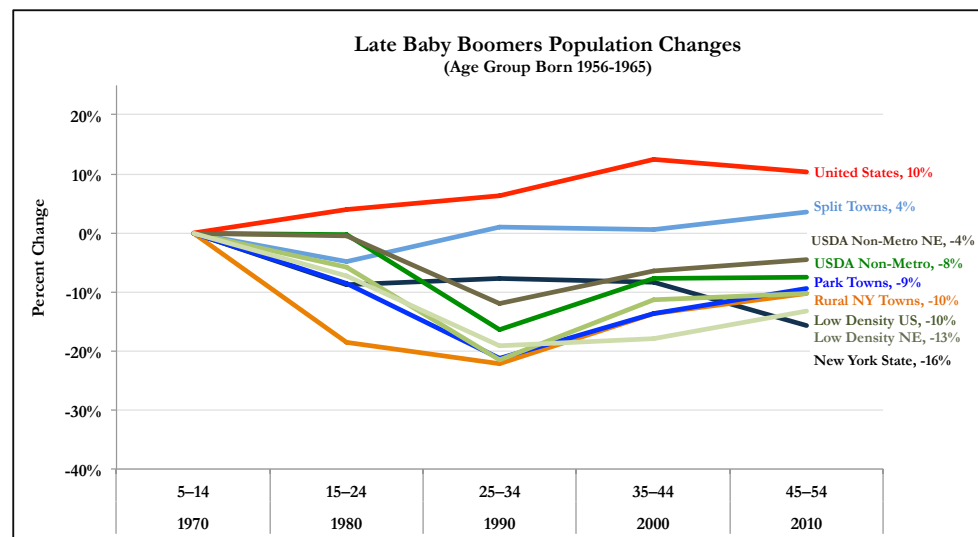


Figure 84 shows in a line graph the population gains or losses of the Late Baby Boom age group across nine different regions from 1970 to 2010.

New York State saw major population losses in every decade, totaling -15.7% for this age group. Over 500,000 Late Baby Boomers left the state in these years. The U.S. grew by 10.2%.

The Park Towns' overall net loss of almost 2,000 Late Baby Boomers from 1970 to

2010 is consistent with the experiences of other rural areas. Recruitment of retirees in 2020 may recoup some losses from earlier decades. The maps on the right show that the experience of the Park Towns was consistent with New York State, the rural Northeast U.S. and Rural America. □

The age group born between 1956 and 1965 contains the second wave of the Baby Boom generation, which we call the Late Baby Boom. They were kids 5 to 14 years old in 1970 and by 2010 they were in the prime of their working careers at age 45 to 54 years. See Table 22. This age group also marks the beginning of a shift that continues today of rural areas seeing steady and significant population losses.

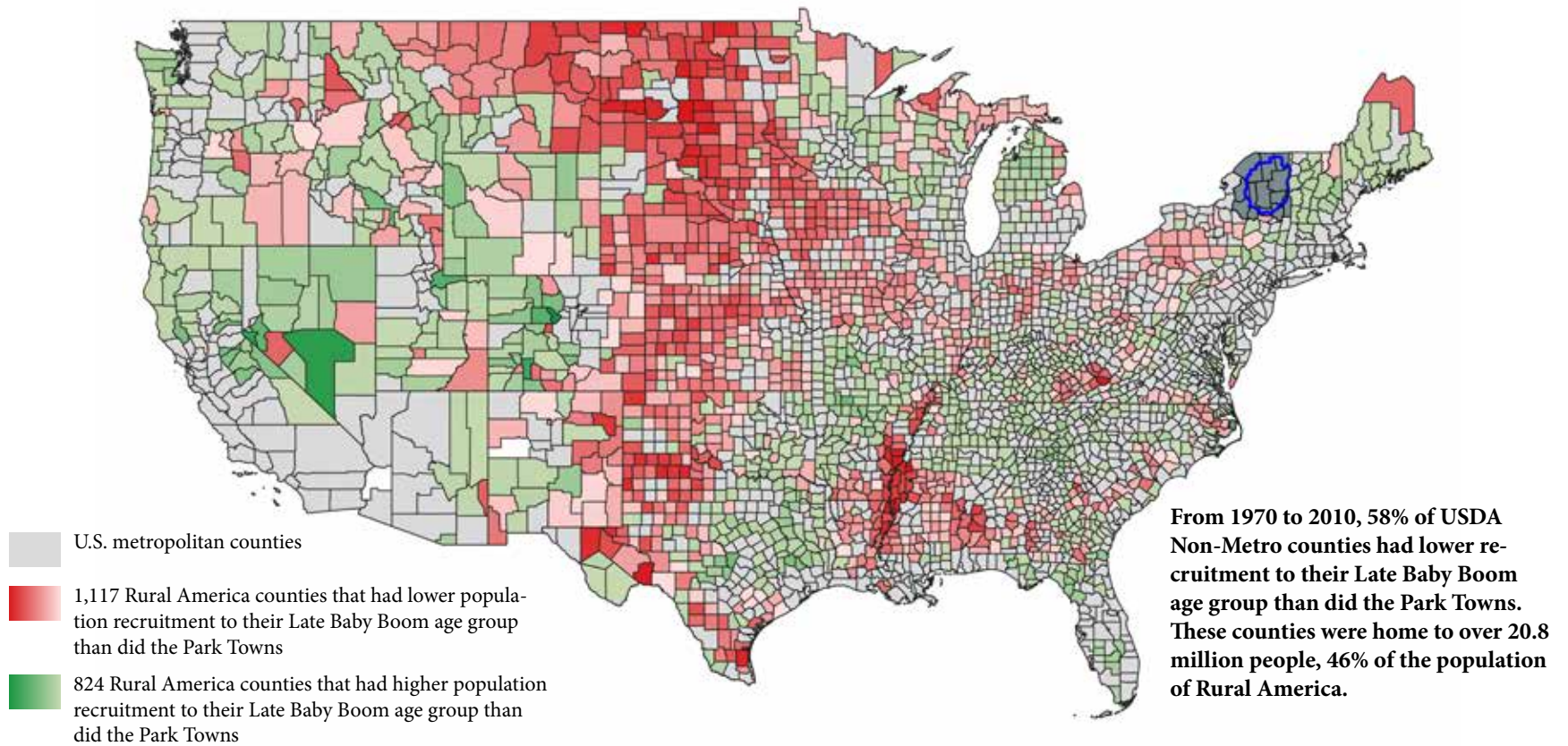
The Park Towns' Late Baby Boom age group saw a -9.4 population loss, which was consistent with other rural areas. Other rural areas saw losses of -4.5% to -13.2%. The Split Towns posted a 3.6% gain.

The Park Towns' Late Baby Boom age group lost over 4,000 college-age young people from 1970 to 1990. Despite this heavy loss, it's important to note that over 15,000 young people chose to stay or moved into the Adirondacks at that time. The Park Towns recruited people after age 35, seeing gains of over 2,000 career age people from 1990 to 2010. The Park Towns showed a rate of recruitment of career age people 35 years and older that was greater than other rural areas.



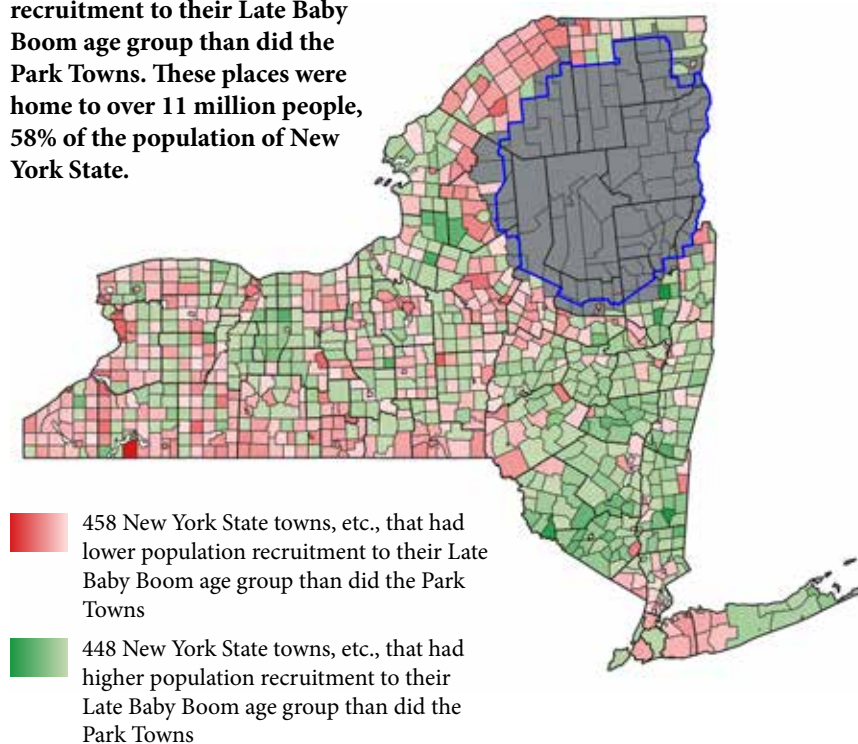
## Population Trends of the Late Baby Boom Age Group 1970 to 2010

**Figure 85: Comparison of population recruitment of the Late Baby Boom age group between the Park Towns and Rural America from 1970 to 2010**



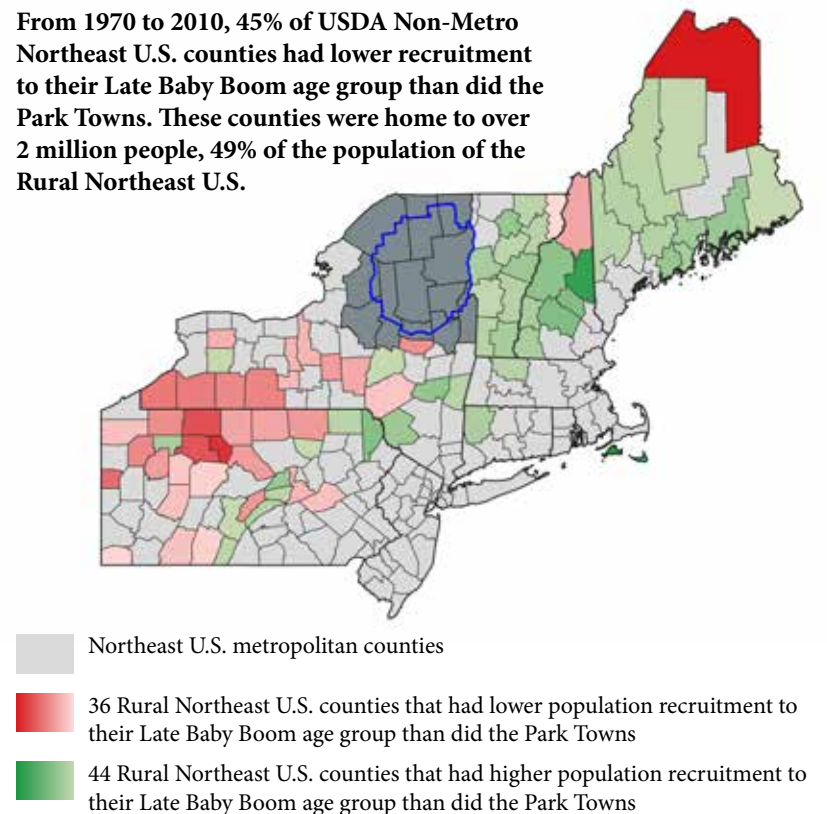
**Figure 86: Comparison of population recruitment of the Late Baby Boom age group between the Park Towns and New York State from 1970 to 2010**

From 1970 to 2010, 51% of New York State towns, etc., had lower recruitment to their Late Baby Boom age group than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 11 million people, 58% of the population of New York State.



**Figure 87: Comparison of population recruitment of the Late Baby Boom age group between the Park Towns and Rural Northeast U.S. from 1970 to 2010**

From 1970 to 2010, 45% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had lower recruitment to their Late Baby Boom age group than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 2 million people, 49% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.





## Population Trends of the Generation X Age Group 1980 to 2010

### Key Findings

The Park Towns' Generation X age group experienced a 22.1% population loss from 1980 to 2010, driven by a loss of over 4,000 college age young people. All other rural areas saw similar major losses of college age young people.

While the Park Towns exported over 4,000 college-age young people, they retained or recruited over 11,000.

The Generation X age group across the U.S. experienced a 17.6% population gain and New York State grew by 0.7%.

The Park Towns recruited nearly 1,000 people after age 35 years old in the prime of their working careers. These gains were consistent with other rural areas.

**Table 23: Population changes in the Generation X age group (born between 1966 and 1975) in nine study regions from 1980 to 2010**

Areas	1980 5-14	1990 15-24	2000 25-34	2010 35-44	Change 1980-2010
<b>New York State</b>	2,588,971	2,596,837	2,723,975	2,607,683	0.7%
<b>Rural NY Towns</b>	10,001	7,566	6,951	7,677	-23.2%
<b>Park Towns</b>	15,799	13,199	11,446	12,313	-22.1%
<b>Split Towns</b>	19,562	17,219	15,403	17,159	-12.3%
<b>United States</b>	34,568,209	35,909,831	39,192,806	40,668,641	17.6%
<b>Rural America</b>					
<b>USDA Non-Metro</b>	6,456,816	5,695,014	5,259,331	5,475,701	-15.2%
<b>Low Density US</b>	2,900,023	2,351,787	2,230,780	2,356,353	-18.7%
<b>USDA Non-Metro NE</b>	628,336	584,432	498,679	536,759	-14.6%
<b>Low Density NE</b>	78,793	68,228	53,895	59,765	-24.1%

Table 23 shows that the Park Towns' Generation X age group dropped by 22.1% from 1980 to 2010. This population loss was driven by the loss of over 4,000 college-age young people who left the Park Towns in 1990 and 2000. While the Park Towns recruited over 800 young people after age 35, this did not recoup the loss of college-age young people. It remains to be seen if the Generation X age group will recruit retirees in the future. Loss of college-age young people drove population losses across all rural areas for the Generation X age group, from -14.6% to -24.1%. In this age group, New York State started to reverse its trend of losing population and the U.S. posted a 17.6% gain.

**Figure 88: Population changes in the Generation X age group (born between 1966 and 1975) in nine study regions from 1980 to 2010**

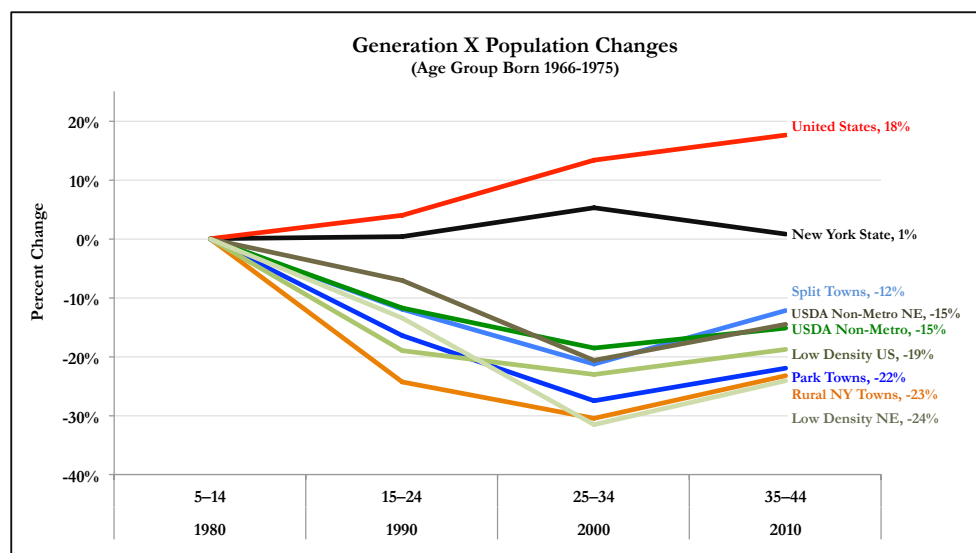


Figure 88 shows in a line graph the population gains or losses of the Generation X age group across nine different regions from 1980 to 2010.

continues for the Generation X age group, and other rural areas, in 2020 and beyond.

Another trend emerged in the Generation X age group. It's that population losses were greater in the most thinly populated of the rural areas. The various "Low Den-

sity" areas posted greater losses than did other rural areas. The maps on the right show that the experience of the Generation X age group in the Park Towns was consistent with that of large swaths of New York, the rural Northeast U.S., and Rural America. □

The Generation X age group was born between 1966 and 1975 and were children 5 to 14 years old in 1980 and adults in the prime of their working careers by 2010. The Park Towns' Generation X age group experienced a major 22.1% loss, driven heavily by the loss of over 4,000 college-age young people. This was similar to losses of other rural areas, which ranged from -14.6% to -24.1%. See Table 23.

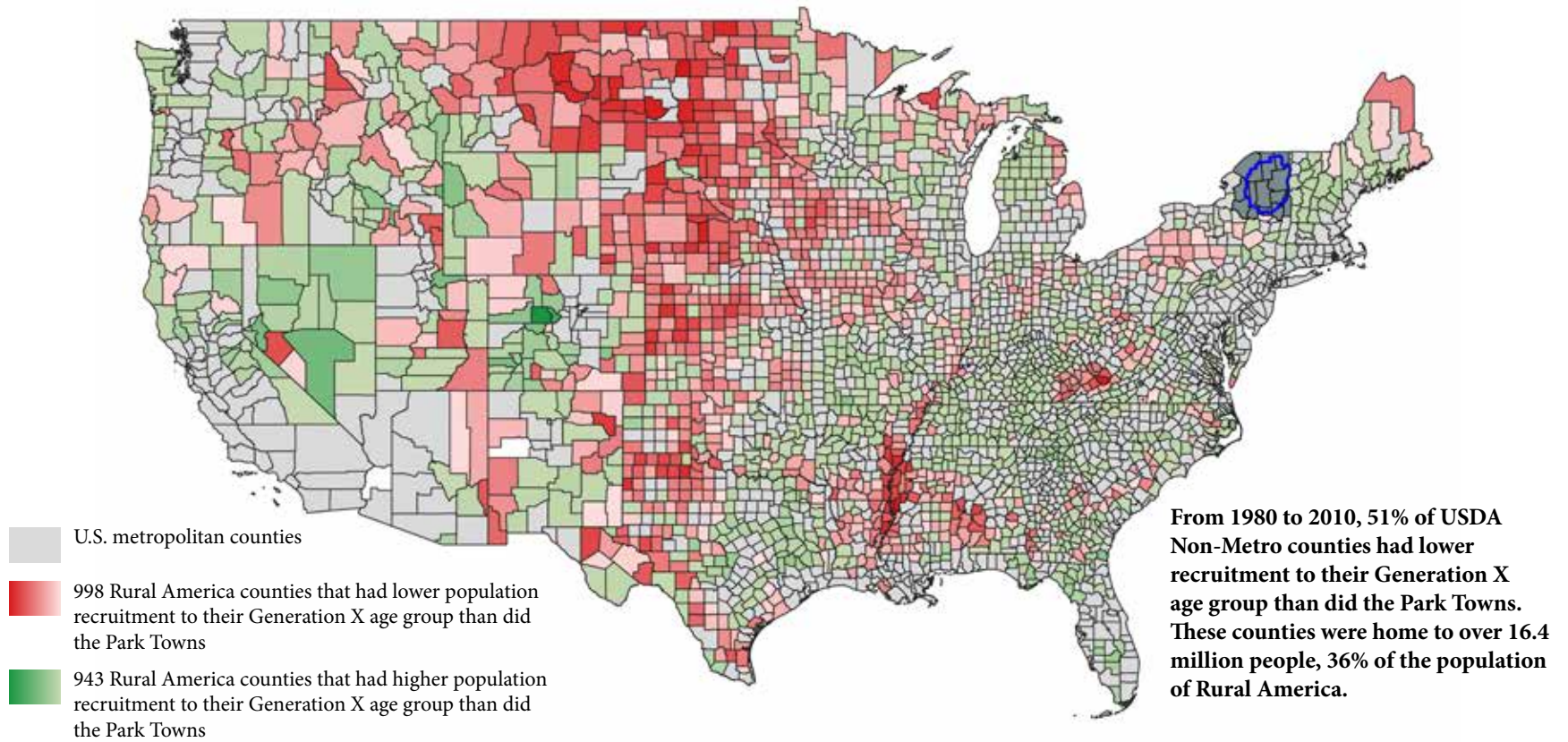
The loss of college age young people was a distinct pattern across all rural areas, but by contrast, New York State recruited over 100,000 college age young people. The U.S. posted major gains as well, as immigration from abroad is driven by young people.

One thing to note is that the heavy loss of college age young people from 1980 to 2000 across rural areas was followed by significant recruitment of people after age 35. These are people in their prime career ages, who made the decision to either move back or move to small towns in rural areas. It remains to be seen if this trend



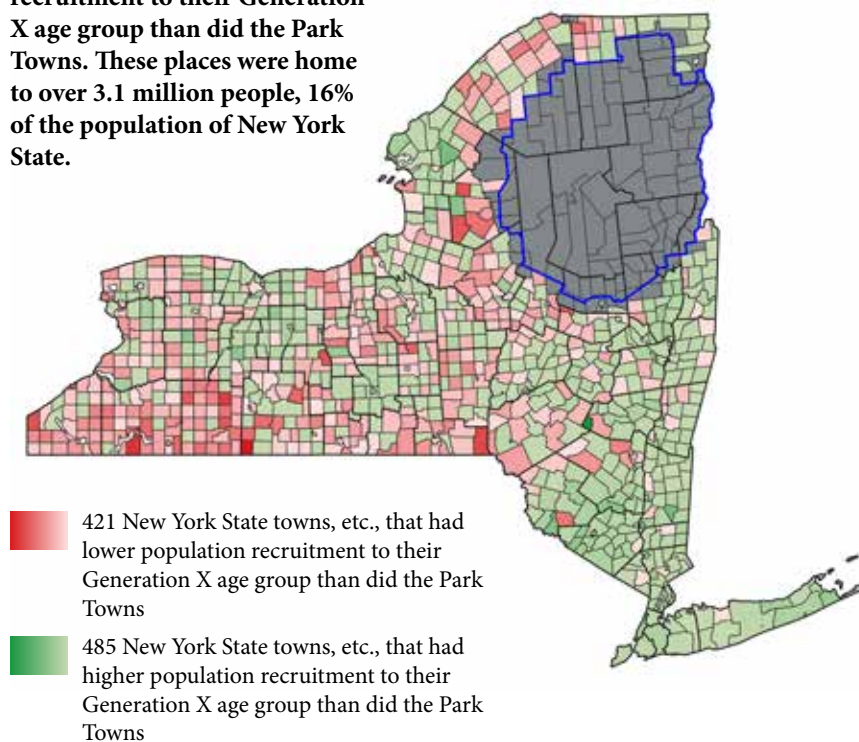
## Population Trends of the Generation X Age Group 1980 to 2010

**Figure 89: Comparison of population recruitment of the Generation X age group between the Park Towns and Rural America from 1980 to 2010**



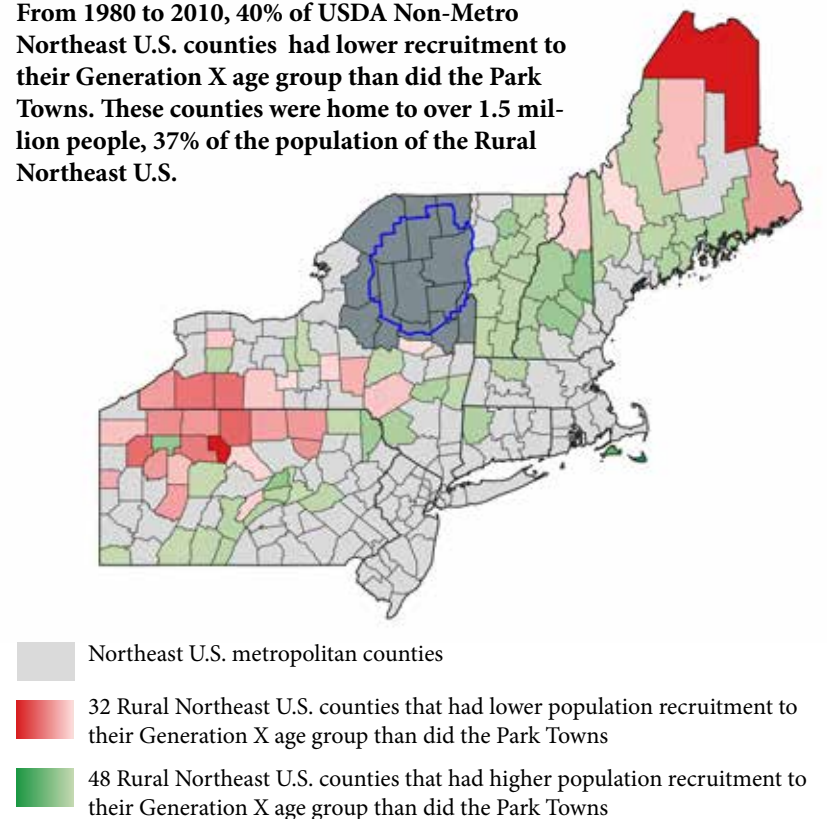
**Figure 90: Comparison of population recruitment of the Generation X age group between the Park Towns and New York State from 1980 to 2010**

From 1980 to 2010, 47% of New York State towns, etc., had lower recruitment to their Generation X age group than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 3.1 million people, 16% of the population of New York State.



**Figure 91: Comparison of population recruitment of the Generation X age group between the Park Towns and Rural Northeast U.S. from 1980 to 2010**

From 1980 to 2010, 40% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had lower recruitment to their Generation X age group than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 1.5 million people, 37% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.





## Population Trends of the Pre-Millennials Age Group 1990 to 2010

### Key Findings

The pre-Millennials age group across the U.S. experienced a 16.5% gain and New York State increased by 14.3%.

The Park Towns' pre-Millennials age group experienced a 27.9% population loss from 1990 to 2010. Nearly 4,000 college age young people moved away. Every rural area lost population, ranging from -16.4% to -35.9%. The Split Towns saw a population loss of -26.0%.

**Table 24: Population changes in the pre-Millennials age group (born between 1976 and 1985) in nine study regions from 1990 to 2010**

Areas	1990 5-14	2000 15-24	2010 25-34	Change 1990-2010
<b>New York State</b>	2,324,264	2,511,230	2,656,515	14.3%
<b>Rural NY Towns</b>	9,347	7,438	5,993	-35.9%
<b>Park Towns</b>	14,164	12,908	10,211	-27.9%
<b>Split Towns</b>	18,022	14,848	13,340	-26.0%
<b>United States</b>	34,888,126	38,550,194	40,659,216	16.5%
<b>Rural America</b>				
<b>USDA Non-Metro</b>	6,225,342	6,100,185	5,206,834	-16.4%
<b>Low Density US</b>	2,898,831	2,682,935	2,315,523	-20.1%
<b>USDA Non-Metro NE</b>	584,605	554,598	451,529	-22.8%
<b>Low Density NE</b>	72,380	60,919	48,725	-32.7%

Table 24 shows that the Park Towns' pre-Millennials age group lost 27.9% of its population from 1990 to 2010. This loss was driven by the loss of nearly 4,000 college-age young people. The Park Towns' losses of college-age young people was similar to losses across rural areas, ranging from -16.4% to -35.9%. The loss of college-age young people is one of the primary facts of life in Rural America. In 2010, there was not enough data to see if the pre-Millennials age group in rural areas will start to recoup some lost population with recruitment of young people of career age.

**Figure 92: Population changes in the pre-Millennials age group (born between 1976 and 1985) in nine study regions from 1990 to 2010**

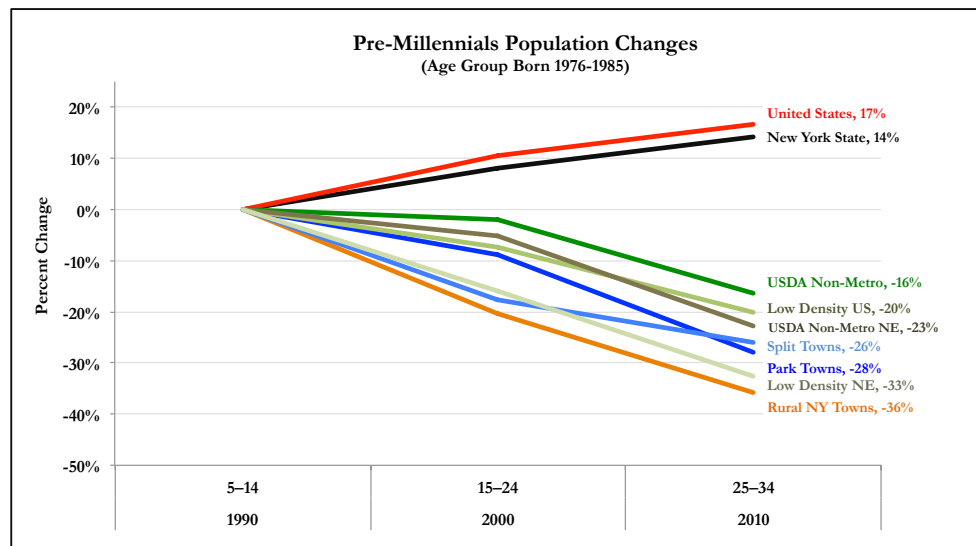


Figure 92 shows in a line graph the population gains or losses of the pre-Millennials age group across nine different regions from 1990 to 2010.

among their pre-Millennials age group than did the Park Towns. Over 60% of the towns, cities and boroughs in New York State and 43% of Rural America counties experienced greater losses than did the Park Towns. Fully 26% of the population of Rural America and 32% of the pop-

ulation of the rural Northeast lived in places with population losses among their pre-Millennials age group greater than that of the Park Towns. The Park Towns' population loss among this age group was consistent with trends across rural areas in the U.S. □

The next age group is the pre-Millennials who were born between 1976 and 1985 and were 5 to 14 years old in 1990 and 25 to 34 in 2010. Though 20 years is a limited time period, the pre-Millennials by 2010 show major population losses from young people leaving rural areas for college or military service. The Park Towns pre-Millennials saw a 27.9% population loss, similar to other rural areas. See Table 24 above.

The population loss of the Park Towns' pre-Millennials was shared across rural areas, ranging from -16.4% to -35.9%. The pattern of heavy loss of college age young people in the Park Towns and other rural areas stands in stark contrast to the population gains in New York State and the U.S. The other pattern that should be noted is that the heaviest losses continued to occur in the most thinly populated regions.

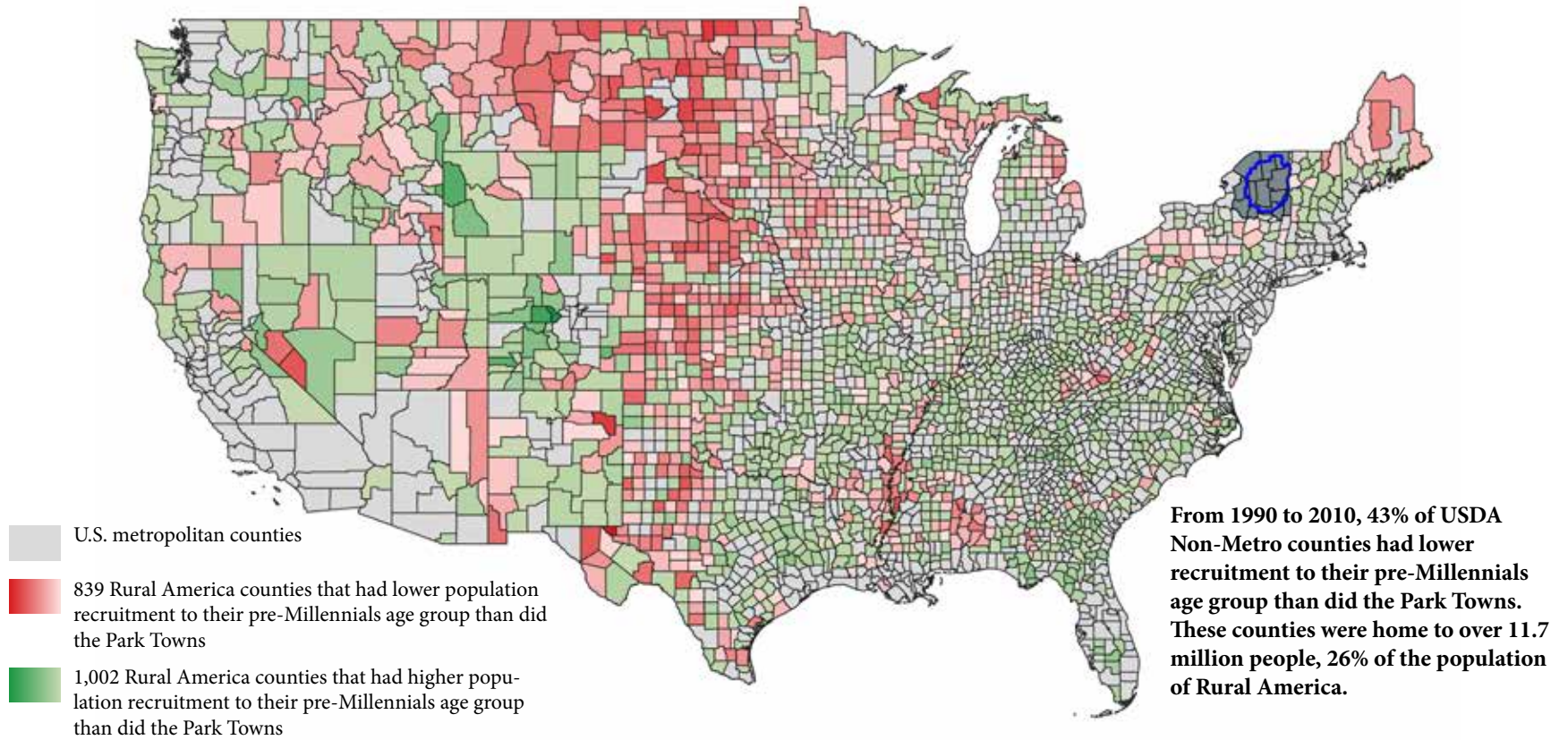
In 2010 there are only data about the loss of college age young people among the various pre-Millennials age groups. Whether pre-Millennials recruit population among 35 year olds is a question that will be answered when new data are available in the next decade.

The maps on the right show vast landscapes across New York State, the rural Northeast U.S. and Rural America that experienced even greater population losses



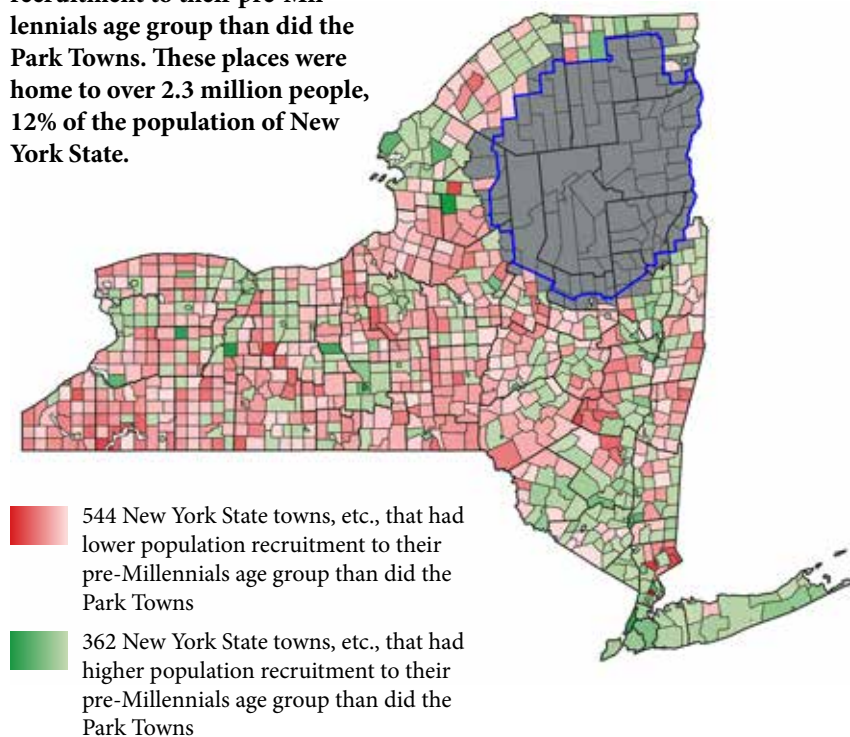
## Population Trends of the Pre-Millennials Age Group 1990 to 2010

**Figure 93: Comparison of population recruitment of the pre-Millennials age group between the Park Towns and Rural America from 1990 to 2010**



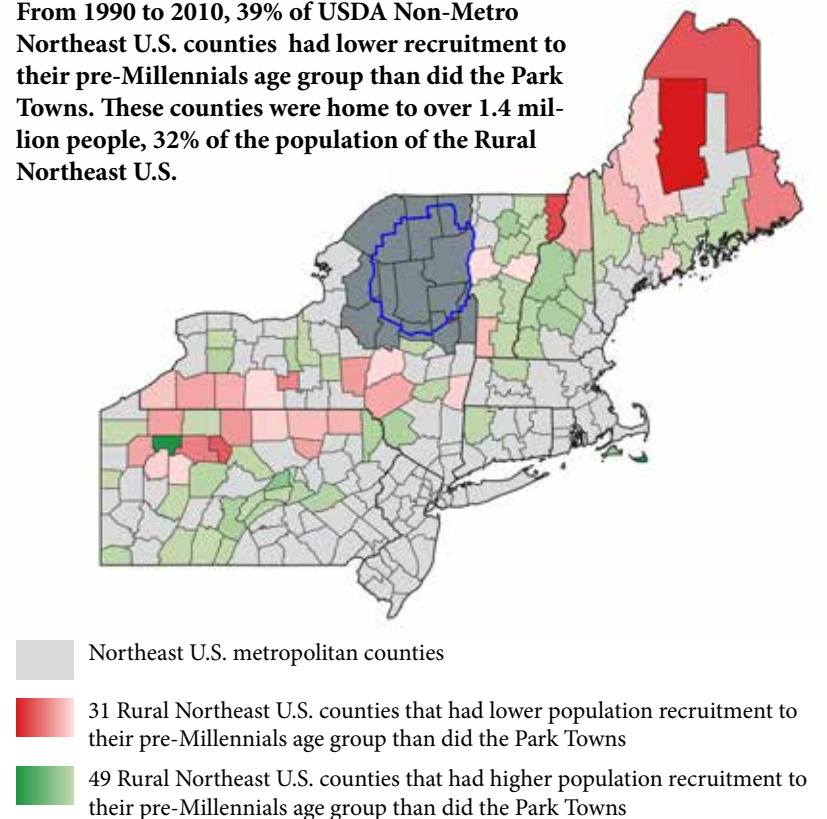
**Figure 94: Comparison of population recruitment of the pre-Millennials age group between the Park Towns and New York State from 1990 to 2010**

From 1990 to 2010, 60% of New York State towns, etc., had lower recruitment to their pre-Millennials age group than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 2.3 million people, 12% of the population of New York State.



**Figure 95: Comparison of population recruitment of the pre-Millennials age group between the Park Towns and Rural Northeast U.S. from 1990 to 2010**

From 1990 to 2010, 39% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had lower recruitment to their pre-Millennials age group than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 1.4 million people, 32% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.





## Population Trends of the Millennials Age Group 2000 to 2010

### Key Findings

The Park Towns' Millennials age group experienced a 13.2% population loss from 2000 to 2010. This loss was consistent with all other rural areas, which saw losses of -3.6% to -23.7%.

The Millennials age group across the U.S. grew by 5.9% and the New York State Millennials grew by 3.1%.

**Table 25: Population changes in the Millennials age group (born between 1986 and 1995) in nine study regions from 2000 to 2010**

Areas	2000 5-14	2010 15-24	Change 2000-2010
<b>New York State</b>	2,691,201	2,775,265	3.1%
<b>Rural NY Towns</b>	9,473	7,225	-23.7%
<b>Park Towns</b>	14,281	12,391	-13.2%
<b>Split Towns</b>	18,158	15,711	-13.5%
<b>United States</b>	40,807,711	43,196,105	5.9%
<b>Rural America</b>			
<b>USDA Non-Metro</b>	6,319,236	6,063,308	-4.0%
<b>Low Density US</b>	2,915,192	2,610,227	-10.5%
<b>USDA Non-Metro NE</b>	587,107	566,183	-3.6%
<b>Low Density NE</b>	66,617	61,041	-8.4%

Table 25 shows that the Park Towns' Millennials age group saw a 13.2% population loss from 2000 to 2010. This loss was driven by the first wave of the departure of college-age young people, where nearly 2,000 left the Park Towns. All rural areas in this study experienced a similar population loss, ranging from -3.6% to -23.7%. New York State and the U.S. Millennials age groups saw modest population gains.

The last age group is the Millennials, who were born between 1986 and 1995, and by 2010 were 15 to 24 years old. The limited data available for the Millennials show that this age group was shaped by the significant loss of college age young people. See Table 25.

The Park Towns saw a loss of nearly 1,900 young people of college age. These years show about half of the total of approximately 4,000 young people that the Park Towns generally lose for college or military service.

The data for the Millennials age group as shown in Table 25 are limited, but the trend is clear. The U.S. grew due to immigration from abroad and New York State grew through recruitment of Millennials to attend college in metropolitan areas. Rural areas as a rule lost Millennials, seeing rates as low as -3.6% to a high of -23.7%. The most thinly populated of the rural areas saw the greatest population losses.

Two things should be noted about the Millennials age group in the Park Towns. First, though the Park Towns lost nearly 2,000 young people, they retained or recruited more than 12,000 young people. Second, the maps on the right show that though the Park Towns' experience of a -13.2% population rate is serious, this loss was less than losses in the Rural New

**Figure 96: Population changes in the Millennials age group (born between 1986 and 1995) in nine study regions from 2000 to 2010**

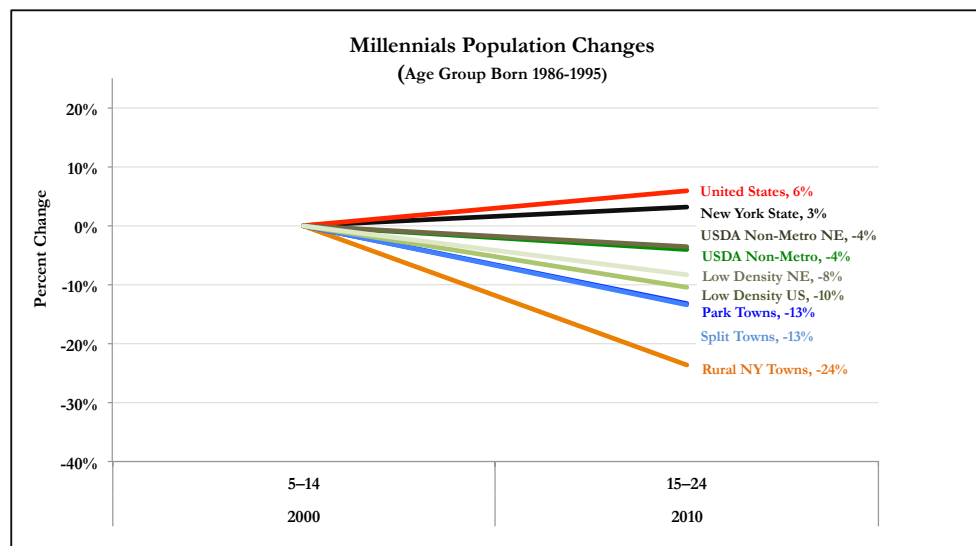


Figure 96 shows in a line graph the population gains or losses of the Millennials age group across nine different regions from 2000 to 2010.

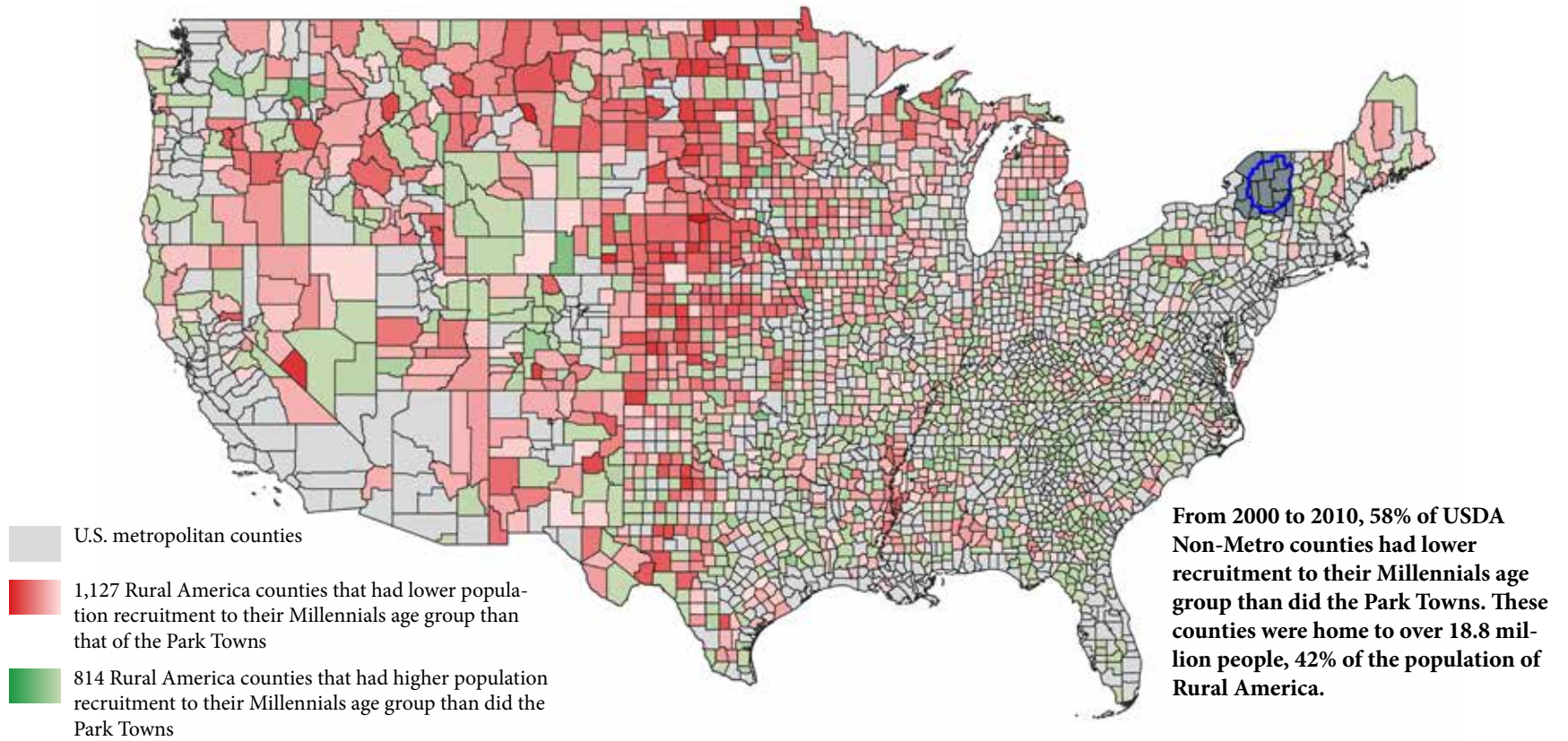
York Towns of -23.7 and the Split Towns of -13.5%. Fully, 69% of the towns, etc., across New York State and 58% of the counties in Rural America experienced even greater losses. These areas were home to 20% of New York's population and 42% of the population of Rural America. It will

be interesting to see in 2020 and beyond whether the Millennials age group sees further population losses or posts population gains. □



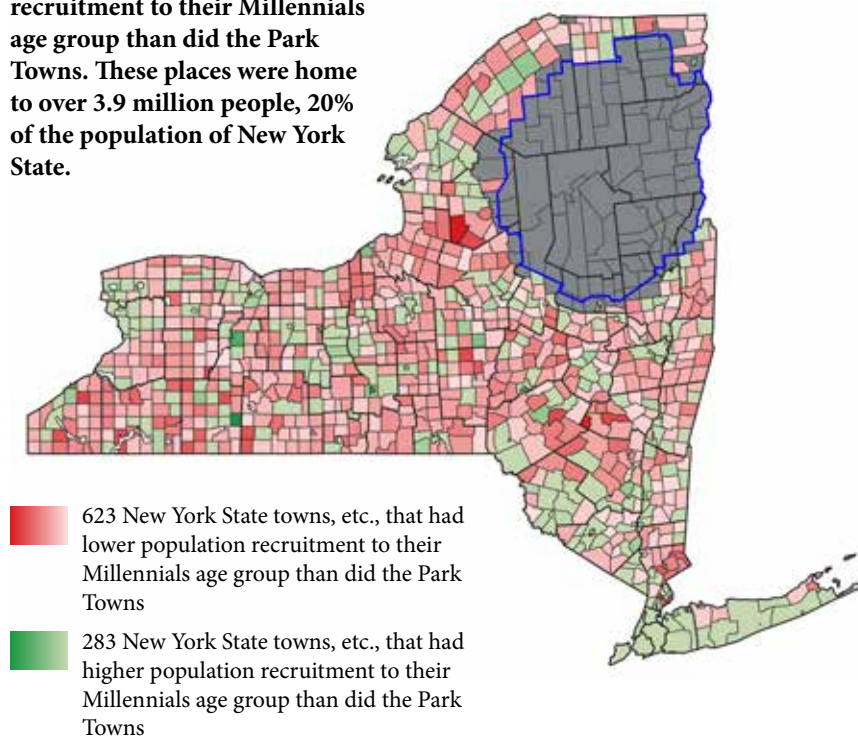
## Population Trends of the Millennials Age Group 2000 to 2010

**Figure 97: Comparison of population recruitment of the Millennials age group between the Park Towns and Rural America from 2000 to 2010**



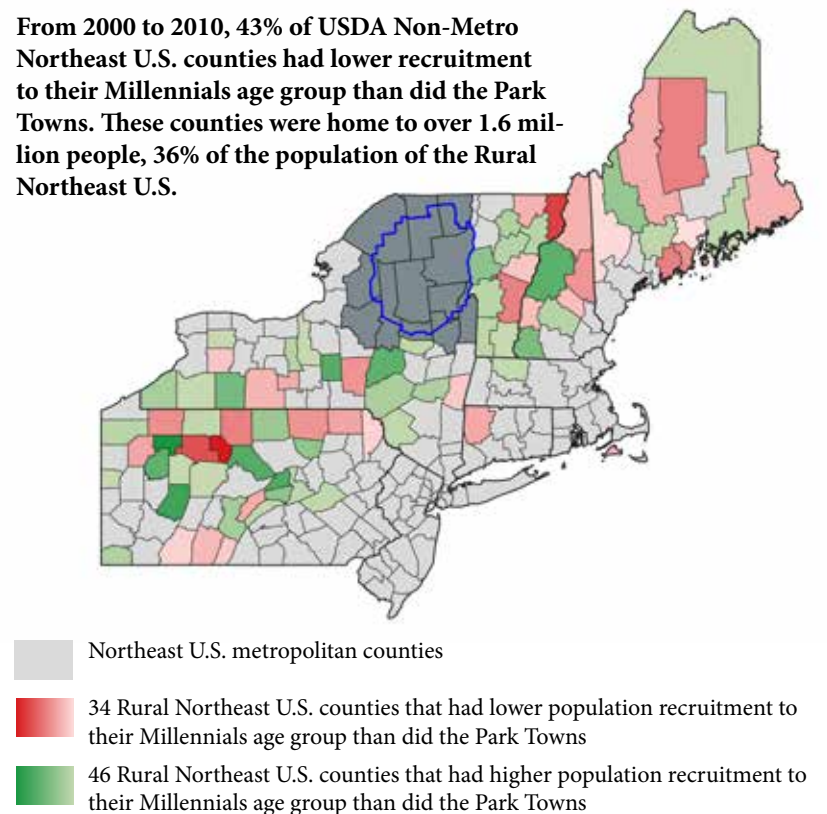
**Figure 98: Comparison of population recruitment of the Millennials age group between the Park Towns and New York State from 2000 to 2010**

From 2000 to 2010, 69% of New York State towns, etc., had lower recruitment to their Millennials age group than did the Park Towns. These places were home to over 3.9 million people, 20% of the population of New York State.



**Figure 99: Comparison of population recruitment of the Millennials age group between the Park Towns and Rural Northeast U.S. from 2000 to 2010**

From 2000 to 2010, 43% of USDA Non-Metro Northeast U.S. counties had lower recruitment to their Millennials age group than did the Park Towns. These counties were home to over 1.6 million people, 36% of the population of the Rural Northeast U.S.





## Population Recruitment of Career Age Adults and Retirees

### Key Findings

In the 40 years under study, the Park Towns consistently gained people in mid-career (35-44 year-olds) at a rate as good as or better than most of rural New York and Rural America.

The Park Towns lost some late-career workers (45-55 year-olds) in 1990, but in subsequent decades gained people of that age at a higher rate than did most of Rural America.

The Park Towns have been more successful in their recruitment of young retirees (55-64 year-olds) than any other area in Rural America.

**Table 26: Comparison of recruitment of career age adults and retirees across nine different regions in the U.S.**

Areas	1980 35-44	1990 35-44	2000 35-44	2010 35-44
New York State	-9.1%	-2.4%	-0.6%	-4.3%
Rural NY Towns	6.7%	12.0%	11.0%	10.4%
Park Towns	11.9%	8.2%	9.7%	7.6%
Split Towns	7.8%	8.2%	-0.5%	11.4%
United States	3.4%	1.2%	5.7%	3.8%
Rural America				
USDA Non-Metro	10.0%	-2.7%	10.3%	4.1%
Low Density US	12.1%	-3.4%	13.1%	5.6%
USDA Non-Metro NE	7.5%	3.0%	6.4%	7.6%
Low Density NE	9.7%	3.2%	1.4%	10.9%

**Rates of population recruitment of 35 to 44 year olds in nine regions across U.S., 1980 to 2010**

*The top table compares the changes in mid-career adult populations (35-44 year-olds) over 40 years between different age groups. The Park Towns consistently re-recruited people starting at age 35 at a higher rate than did New York State and the U.S. and compared favorably with the rates of recruitment in other rural areas.*

Areas	1990 45-54	2000 45-54	2010 45-54
New York State	-5.0%	-6.1%	-8.0%
Rural NY Towns	-3.5%	1.6%	3.8%
Park Towns	-0.6%	5.1%	4.9%
Split Towns	-0.9%	-3.3%	3.0%
United States	-0.7%	-0.1%	-2.0%
Rural America			
USDA Non-Metro	-2.7%	4.3%	0.3%
Low Density US	-3.2%	6.3%	1.0%
USDA Non-Metro NE	-1.8%	0.2%	2.1%
Low Density NE	-1.2%	-0.5%	5.8%

**Rates of population recruitment of 45 to 54 year olds in nine regions across U.S., 1990 to 2010**

*The middle table compares the changes in late-career adult populations (44-54 year-olds) over 30 years between different age groups. After a decline in 1990, which was shared by all other regions, the Park Towns recruited late-career adults at higher rates than did most other areas.*

Areas	2000 55-64	2010 55-64
New York State	-13.6%	-9.8%
Rural NY Towns	7.8%	1.4%
Park Towns	9.2%	5.7%
Split Towns	-3.2%	-2.0%
United States	-5.1%	-2.9%
Rural America		
USDA Non-Metro	4.1%	1.3%
Low Density US	7.3%	3.3%
USDA Non-Metro NE	-0.7%	-0.8%
Low Density NE	2.9%	5.1%

**Rates of population recruitment of 55 to 64 year olds in nine regions across U.S., 2000 to 2010**

*The third table shows recruitment of young retirees (55-64 year-olds) over 20 years between age groups. The Park Towns stand out from New York, the U.S., and other rural areas in their high recruitment rate of young retirees.*

*Table 26 consists of three separate tables showing the gain or loss ("recruitment rate") of three age groups in nine regions in the U.S. and Rural America. The tables are color-coded to more easily show gains (green shades) and losses (red shades). The top table shows recruitment levels at age 35 at different times from 1980 to 2010 across the nine regions. The middle table shows recruitment levels at age 45 and the bottom table shows recruitment at age 55.*

Age group analysis is especially useful for comparing population growth or loss in specific age groups over a period of time across various geographic areas. Is it true—as one often hears in the Adirondacks—that people of prime family- and career-age are leaving? Is the rest of Rural America experiencing a similar loss?

Table 26 compares the gain (what is often called "recruitment") or loss of career-age adults and early retirees in the populations of the Adirondacks and Rural America. In each of these age groups, the Park Towns usually recruited people, meaning that more moved in than moved out or died, during the previous ten years. Over the decades examined in this report, the Park Towns often recruited career age people at a rate as high as or better than did most other rural areas in New York State or the U.S. Collectively, the Park Towns are often gaining mid- and late-career age adults. The Park Towns also recruit people of retirement age at a higher rate than other rural areas. The data shows that the Park Towns enjoy significantly higher recruitment of people after age 55 than do other areas. □



## Breakdown of Population Loss for the 62 Park Towns from 2000 to 2010

**Table 27: A Breakdown of population loss from 2000 to 2010 in the 62 Adirondack Park Towns**

2000 Population		2010 Population		Change	Comment
Age	Number	Age	Number		
		0 to 4	4,838	4,838	Births or young children who moved in (+100% of age group)
		5 to 9	5,179	5,179	Births or young children who moved in (+100%)
0 to 4	5,302	10 to 14	5,922	620	Gain of children who moved in (+11.6%)
5 to 9	6,695	15 to 19	6,814	119	Gain of teenagers or college-age young people (+1.7%)
10 to 14	7,586	20 to 24	5,577	-2,009	Loss of college-age young people (-26.4%)
15 to 19	7,577	25 to 29	5,115	-2,462	Loss of college-age young people (-32.4%)
20 to 24	5,331	30 to 34	5,096	-235	Loss of college-age young people, other residents (-4.4%)
25 to 29	5,067	35 to 39	5,565	498	Gain of young career age adults (+9.8%)
30 to 34	6,379	40 to 44	6,748	369	Gain of career age adults (+5.7%)
35 to 39	8,167	45 to 49	8,574	407	Gain of mid-career adults (+4.9%)
40 to 44	8,765	50 to 54	9,180	415	Gain of mid-career adults (+4.7%)
45 to 49	7,848	55 to 59	8,510	662	Gain of retirement age adults (+8.4%)
50 to 54	7,600	60 to 64	7,826	226	Gain of retirement age adults (+3%)
55 to 59	6,371	65 to 69	6,196	-175	Loss through mortality and out-migration (-2.7%)
60 to 64	5,182	70 to 74	4,421	-761	Loss through mortality and out-migration (-14.6%)
65 to 69	5,034	75 to 79	3,502	-1,532	Loss through mortality and out-migration (-30.4%)
70 to 74	4,519	80+	4,890	-7,249	Loss through mortality and out-migration (-60%)
75 to 79	3,437				
80+	4,183				
<b>2000 Total: 105,043</b>		<b>2010 Total: 103,953</b>		<b>-1,090 (-1.037% population rate 2000-2010)</b>	

### Key Finding

The 1% population loss from 2000 to 2010 in the 62 Park Towns was from the loss of college age young people and mortality or out-migration of older residents.

An analysis of population change from 2000 to 2010 breaks down the -1.037% population rate of the 62 Park Towns. The Park Towns' population dropped from 105,043 in 2000 to 103,953 in 2010, a loss of 1,090 people. What explains this drop in population?

A breakdown of exactly where the -1.037% drop occurred in the 62 Park Towns is provided in Table 27 above. This table shows the changes in 5-year age groups from 2000 to 2010. This analysis shows losses due to the exodus of college age young people and mortality of older residents.

A total of 13,333 people arrived through births (10,017), by being brought in by their parents as young children (739), as young adults after age 25 (498), as mid-career adults after age 30 (1,191), or as retirees after age 55 (888). These gains were offset by population losses of

14,423 people. These losses were seen in the departure of college age young people (4,706) and in the loss of older residents who moved away or died (9,717). Recruitment of new residents to Adirondacks in 2010 was not high enough to replace these losses, but this could change in the future.

Many questions face Adirondack communities. With such a small population, it's important to bear in mind that the decisions of a few hundred individuals and families can positively or negatively effect the population trajectories of Adirondack communities. □



## Final Thoughts



### Stop Blaming the Park

As the data and analysis of this report have made clear, it is time to stop blaming whatever economic distress we find in the Adirondack Park on environmental protection, either in purchase of land for the Forest Preserve or conservation easement, or through limiting development on private land. The Adirondack Park and its residents and businesses are part of Rural America and subject to all the population and economic pressures experienced by similar regions throughout the United States. Adirondack economic and population trends are fully consistent with the experience of other rural areas across the U.S.

The Adirondack Park has been held up as a bold experiment in conservation and environmental protection. At the same time, the impacts on the local economy and population have been argued about with anecdotes or limited data, such as com-

paring some indicator for an Adirondack county with that of the New York State average. Difficult questions have seldom received thorough examination. Through careful analysis in this report, we have shown that the economic and population trends of Adirondack communities over the past 40 years are consistent with those of other rural areas, even as environmental protections have advanced significantly.

### The Adirondack Experience is the Experience of Rural America

One reality of life in Rural America is that there are fewer choices than those found in metropolitan areas for just about everything, from restaurants and shops to employment opportunities and basic services. In the Adirondacks, these limitations are offset by the joys of small-town life and easy access to the public Forest Preserve, which provides an abundance of wild areas, forests, mountains, and waters. The natural landscape of the Adirondacks

is not only beautiful, but it provides many opportunities for outdoor recreational activities and underwrites the high quality of life for residents.

When it comes to local economic or population trends, the realities of Adirondack life are similar to those of other rural areas. Adirondack Park communities are today, and always have been, among the most thinly populated areas of the United States. The 62 Adirondack Park Towns are part of a geography of the most sparsely populated reaches of Rural America—an area that occupies 62% of the land area of the lower 48 U.S. states and is home to just 6.6% of the population.

What is special about the Adirondack Park is the world-class protected landscape of mountains, forests, lakes and rivers. The abundant, protected natural resources are key assets and advantages for the region and sets the Adirondack Park apart from most other rural areas.



## Final Thoughts

From 1970 to 2010, compared to rural communities elsewhere, many Adirondack communities experienced improvement in median household income, per capita income, and poverty rate. Far from showing a wasteland of economic distress, long-term trends over 40 years show Adirondack communities that consistently out-performed other areas in Upstate New York and across Rural America.

The employment rate in Adirondack communities experienced significant gains in these years. Two considerations were revealed in employment data that merit further investigation by Park leaders. First, the self-employment rate of Adirondack communities is increasing at the same time that it is declining across many parts of Rural America. This is a promising basis for recruiting people to live in the Park. An investment to create some form of support infrastructure for self-employed people in the Adirondacks should be considered.

Second, many Adirondack communities are seeing recruitment of career age adults around age 35. While our analysis disproved a common misperception in the Adirondacks about young families forced to leave the Park, the opposite reality points to an opportunity. Adirondack communities would benefit from some type of career center or clearinghouse that helped identify career-track employment opportunities to match those who want to live in the Adirondacks with existing career opportunities.

Adirondack communities are part of a vast landscape in the U.S. where declining population is the norm. In 2010, 35% of counties in the lower 48 U.S. states, which were home to over 43.3 million people and covered one-third of the country, lost population. Losses were more widespread in Rural America where 47% of counties lost population.

New York State, including its rural areas, has a low birth rate, very different from the rates across Rural America. Population growth in Rural America in the decades after World War II was followed by decades of urbanization and rural flight, which accelerated after 2000. Metropolitan area populations have expanded and rural areas have contracted. All of these factors, shaped by national or state trends, suggest that Adirondack communities may see slow population loss for decades.

The only areas where the Adirondack Park is distinctive or where we are a meaningful statistical outlier is median age and the ratio of children to adults of childbearing age. The Adirondack Park is part of a landscape shared with 525 counties and over 13.4 million people across the U.S. that have a median age 45.7 years or older. The high median age in the Adirondacks is due to a combination of factors: an older rural population; a low rate of reproduction; and recruitment of retirees. While the high median age of the Adirondacks stands out, it's important to note that fully 24% of counties across Rural America have a similarly high median age.

The Park's ratio of children to adults of childbearing age is low when compared to other rural areas, but it is consistent with the ratio of New York State and the U.S. Around the world, declining birth rates are driven by affluence, family planning, and increased educational opportunities for women. In 2010, if the adults of childbearing age in the Adirondacks reproduced at the rate seen in other rural areas in the U.S. we would have seen upwards of 2,000 to 2,800 more children under 14 years of age. That would be a dramatic increase in the area's school enrollment population.

One consequence of the low ratio of children to adults of childbearing age is that most Adirondack school districts have experienced declining enrollments. These declines must be assessed in the context of

the larger trend of declining school populations across New York State. Fully 88% of New York school districts experienced a decline in enrollments. Long-term population trends in New York are shaping enrollment numbers in Adirondack schools. Small and declining school populations are likely a reality for Adirondack communities for decades to come.

Adirondack communities face the same set of population realities as do other communities across Rural America. Long-term trends for rural areas across the U.S. show a future of population losses driven by two factors: 1) The departure of young people, primarily for college; 2) The deaths of older residents, who constitute a high percentage of the residents of both Rural America and the Adirondacks. The road ahead will not be an easy one for the Adirondack Park. The forces shaping Adirondack population dynamics are the same forces shaping the dynamics of Rural America, and they will be difficult to alter or reverse. Rural areas lose young people for college and military service. Rural areas have higher numbers of older residents due to patterns of high birth rates in Rural America in the years after World War II. By 2010, the last year that we have data for, as a consequence of the rural baby boom from the 1940s to the 1970s, we are seeing high levels of natural mortality of older residents.

Despite slow population loss in Adirondack communities, there are some bright spots. Many Adirondack communities see population gains at higher rates than those of many other rural areas among career age adults who move to the area after age 35, in the prime of their working careers. Unlike many other rural areas, the Adirondacks recruits a significant number of retirees. The challenge facing Adirondack communities is that the gains made in career age adults and retirees are not large enough to recoup the total losses of college age young people.



## Final Thoughts



### A Fork in the Road

The Adirondack Park is coming to the close of a historic period of land protection. The next 25 years will see far less acreage added to the Forest Preserve or protected by conservation easements than was the case during the last 25 years. The final shape of the Adirondack Park is coming into focus as the total of land in public and private hands approaches its final mix.

Now is the time to take stock of the last 40 years, ask important questions, and organize an accurate assessment of the root causes of the economic and population challenges facing Adirondack communities. This will lead to better decision making and intelligent choices to guide strategies for sustaining and expanding the local economy and communities and making critical investments.

In the Adirondack Park, there are signs of success. From 1970 to 2010, the Park has experienced an increase in wealth as measured by median household income, per capita income, and poverty rates. The employment rates of Park communities

grew by margins higher than those of New York and the U.S. The Park's self-employment rate is higher than that of most other rural areas. Our overall population trends are consistent with vast swaths of Rural America. The accomplishments of the last 40 years have created a solid foundation on which to continue to build sustainable and viable communities across the Adirondacks, though major challenges remain.

### The Challenges Ahead

Now is the time to assess accurately the state of Adirondack communities and develop new strategies that will prepare the region for the decades ahead. Now is the time to develop plans for how Adirondack communities can grow more dynamic and prosperous even with smaller populations.

A number of questions need to be asked and answered. How can Adirondack government and business leaders work with the state to acknowledge the profound appeal of living, playing, and working amid millions of acres of protected open space? How can we look more carefully at

the causes of economic and demographic realities to craft realistic long-term strategies for community and economic development? Will Adirondack communities continue to attract upwards of 2,000 retirees per decade? Will this number go up or down? Will Adirondack communities continue to recruit small populations of career age young people and what can be done to expand this number? What services and support can be created to expand levels of self-employment or recruit self-employed people to move to the Park?

Adirondack Park and New York State leaders and planners can answer these and other questions using solid data and analysis. They can acknowledge the realities of Rural America and emphasize the spectacular asset that is the Adirondack Park. For 125 years, the Adirondack Park has been a New York State and national treasure. There is no reason why the future cannot be one where rigorously protected open space continues to surround and sustain vibrant communities. □



## Recommendations

Further investigation into rural counties in different regions of the U.S. that are defying predominant national trends of economic stagnation and population loss is merited. These areas may have strategies that are useful for Adirondack communities.

Further investigation should also look at regions across the U.S. that have similar characteristics as Adirondack communities in the percent of public lands, percent of forest cover, extensive lakes and rivers, are rated for high natural resource and scenic amenity values, tourism dependent, are largely non-agricultural rural areas, among other characteristics. Such comparisons could shed additional light on the long-term trends of Adirondack communities and help to find models for rural community viability and development.

The creation of some kind of forum that identifies employment and careers that are available in the Adirondacks merits investigation. This would allow those who grew up in the Adirondacks and want to stay here and those from outside the area who want to move here to acquire the necessary skills or training to find career-track employment in the Adirondacks. The Adirondack Park currently recruits a small number of career age people after age 35, similar to trends in other rural areas. How to increase the number of career age people moving to the Adirondacks should be investigated.

The high self-employment rate, which is growing in the Adirondacks, merits further investigation. While self-employment rates have historically been higher in rural areas than in metropolitan areas, many rural areas are seeing major losses in self-employed people. Efforts should be made to organize support services and incentives for Adirondack residents who wish to be self-employed and for recruitment of self-employed people to move to the Adirondacks.

The Adirondack Park recruits retirees at a higher level than do other rural areas. Throughout the Adirondacks, over 1,000 retirees, often in couples, move to various communities each decade. These people bring financial resources and frequently are eager to be involved in a variety of community organizations and non-profits, often providing critical leadership. These people often are active for 20 to 30 years in their new communities. Identifying the needs of this population and how to attract more people to retire in the Adirondacks merits further investigation. The attractiveness of an area for retirement often consists of the availability of social amenities, such as restaurants and cafes, accessibility to a wide variety of outdoor recreational opportunities, and health care.

The Adirondack Park has a small population where the decisions of 1,000 people or less in a given decade, 100 people per year, to move to the Adirondacks, can determine whether Adirondack communities gain or lose population. An incentives package for population recruitment merits investigation.

Vermont has started a variety of programs designed to recruit remote workers to move to the state and encourage young people to make their lives there. These types of incentive programs merit investigation for the Adirondacks.

Successful rural community development strategies have been implemented around a “shrink smart” concept where a community planning and strategy program works to build more vital and vibrant communities even as the population declines. This effort has been most visibly pioneered in Iowa.

The Adirondack Park, like all other rural areas, experiences its biggest population loss when college-age young people leave. Today, most colleges and universities are

in metropolitan areas in the U.S. and many small rural areas are closing. One way to stem this tide is to develop programs to expand enrollments at Paul Smith’s College and North Country Community College to attract students from the Adirondacks and beyond.

Investments in community development require funding. State and federal funding wax and wane with economic and political cycles. Adirondack communities would benefit from some form of dedicated revenue to support community and economic development from sources, such as a bed tax for motels and hotels as well as time-shares and Airbnb rentals, or a surcharge on the real estate transfer tax, among other possibilities. A sustainable, dedicated funding source for Adirondack community development should be investigated.

Not all Adirondack communities are experiencing the same trends. Some are seeing economic and population growth and some are experiencing decline. This report did not undertake individual community assessments, but this is an area in inquiry that merits investigation.

The strength of rural communities in the Adirondacks is inextricably tied to the protected landscape that surrounds them. The stewardship of the Forest Preserve and conservation easements should be expanded. Protection efforts should be sustained to protect the open space landscape and waters across the Adirondacks.

After completion of the 2020 decennial US Census in 2022-23, this report should be updated to examine how Adirondack communities compared with other rural areas over a 50-year time frame. □



## Methods



### Data Acquisition

The raw data used in this report are all publicly available from sources described below. These raw data are also available on the Protect the Adirondacks website.

We obtained U.S. Census data for five decennial census projects from 1970 to 2010. We purchased these data from a census broker who organizes census data for research. Through this purchase, we acquired census data for New York at the municipality level (town, borough, city, reservation, etc.) and for the U.S. at the county (parish, etc.) level for all of the economic and population data discussed below. The U.S. Census economic data after the year 2000 became part of their American Community Survey (ACS) project. These are available as 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year samples. To ensure stable 2010 measures (even for census areas as small

as 600 to 3000 persons), we purchased the ACS 5-year data comprising samples from 2008 through 2012.

We obtained USDA Rural-Urban Continuum Codes of all U.S. counties, parishes, etc., from the U.S. Department of Agriculture website. We obtained CPI-U deflator time series data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics website.

Through Freedom of Information requests to New York State, we obtained prison populations for four institutions inside the Adirondack Park: Adirondack in North Elba, Clinton in Dannemora, Moriah Shock in Moriah, and Camp Gabriels in Brighton. Similarly, we obtained federal prison populations for the Federal Correctional Institution at Ray Brook in North Elba.

Through Freedom of Information re-

quests, we obtained from the NYS Office of the State Comptroller the total taxable assessments of towns, cities, and boroughs across New York for 1982 and 2012. We used the years 1982 to 2012 because the Comptroller's Office stated these were reliable data and earlier data were unavailable.

Through Freedom of Information requests, we obtained from the NYS Department of Education the school district enrollment for 1970 and 2010.

### Preprocessing Steps

Prior to 1990, population count anomalies existed in the U.S. Census age range data. For any given census area, the sum of the populations of all of the age ranges did not precisely match the published total population for that census area. This discrepancy was generally small, but we needed to correct it prior to our analysis. Thus,



## Methods

for each census area, we prorated each age range population value to ensure that the age range population totals matched published population totals.

Each U.S. Census has changed to reflect a few merged-together or split-apart census areas. These changes resulted in slightly varying total number of census areas from one analysis to the next. Throughout this report, when we referred to the U.S., we were excluding Puerto Rico, Alaska, and Hawaii. When we referred to New York, we were excluding Indian Reservations.

In 2010, there were 4,580 inmates in Adirondack prisons (and even more inmates in 2000). The total Park Towns prison population has been an anomalously large 4% of the total Park Towns population, whereas across the U.S. the state and federal prison inmate population was 0.5% of the total population in 2010. Therefore, we subtracted the prison population data of each prison from its respective town's population and age range population counts. Prior to this subtraction, we first needed to preprocess the prison population data as follows. Some prison population age range categories used by the prisons did not precisely match the age ranges used by the U.S. Census. Therefore, we prorated those mismatched prison age range populations to match the U.S. Census age range categories. While total prison population was available, prison age range population counts were not available for the earliest census. Therefore, we back-projected those age distributions.

For inflation correction of both incomes and real property taxable assessments, we multiplied dollar amounts by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI-U deflator time series.

### Analysis Strategy

We analyzed various indicators over nine geographic regions. Our first four regions

included the lower 48 U.S. counties (parishes, etc.), the New York State towns (boroughs, etc.), the 62 Park Towns wholly inside the Park, and the 30 Split Towns that straddle the Park boundary.

We used the Rural-Urban Continuum Codes of all U.S. counties (parishes, etc.) codes "4" through "9" to define the subset of U.S. Counties comprising our USDA rural regions.

We used the weighted mean population density of the 62 Park Towns (the overall mean population density) to define other regions. We selected the subset of U.S. counties whose median population density precisely matched the weighted mean population density of the 62 Park Towns. We called this subset of counties the "low density" counties. To select a set of New York State towns matching the Park Towns, we instead targeted the median. The resulting subset of 47 "low density" New York towns were comparable to the set of 62 Park Towns in median town population density.

We created two further subsets of the aforementioned USDA subset and "low density" U.S. County subset by including just those counties inside the nine north-east states from Pennsylvania and New Jersey up to Maine. We identified these regions with the suffix "Northeast" or "NE".

We used all of the above nine defined regions in our analyses. We have posted on the Protect the Adirondacks' website lists of census areas that comprise each of these geographic regions used in this report.

Throughout this report, we employed descriptive statistics. When aggregating multiple counties or multiple towns in a region of interest, we generally computed a population-weighted mean. Thus, we obtained the same result as would be obtained if the region of interest were a single county or town. The exceptions all involve medians. The U.S. Census median

age data were only available for 1980 and 2010. The mean of a set of medians is not the same as the actual median of the aggregated underlying data. For median age, we successfully solved this statistical challenge by summing age range populations and then linearly interpolated within these narrow (five-year or narrower) age ranges to obtain median age. We verified that our median ages computed by this population age-range interpolation method agreed with the available U.S. Census median age data. For median household income, given the available U.S. Census data, we computed the weighted mean of all of the median household incomes for all the counties or towns in the region of interest as our best estimate of median household income for that entire region.

This study largely uses two time frames for analysis; 1970 to 2010 and 2010. For our trend analysis, we computed the change from 1970 to 2010. In some cases, e.g., percent poverty, it was most meaningful to express the change as an arithmetic change in percent poverty (change in percentage points). In other cases, e.g., per capita income, it was most meaningful to express the change as a ratio of the 2010 income to the 1970 income. The individual census area comparisons were later used in map creation as described below.

For our 2010 "snapshot" analyses, we compared the mean of the Park towns with all of the aforementioned regions. In these analyses, we examined only the 2010 data. We compared all New York towns or U.S. counties in the various regions with the mean of the Park towns. We also noted the total number of towns or counties that fared less well than the mean of Park Towns. We reported the total number of those towns or counties, and their total population. No statistical computation was involved other than computing the means. The individual census area comparisons were later used in map creation as described below.



## Methods

Using U.S. Census data, we analyzed the following economic indicators: median household income, per capita income, poverty rate, employment rate, and self-employment rate. We selected these indicators because sampled data were available at the local (town, city, borough) level in New York and the county (parish, etc.) level across the U.S. Median household income, per capita income, and poverty rates are also useful in assessing economic performance over time, though incomes need to be adjusted for inflation. Multiple unemployment measures exist. For this reason, we avoided unemployment and instead used ratios of employment to population.

We also included an analysis of total real property taxable assessed value of all towns across New York from 1982 to 2012. The total taxable assessed value is the total assessed value of land and improvements (e.g., buildings) in a town, city or borough. In these 30 years, all towns, etc., across New York saw a growth in their total assessed value, but there were significant variations in the rate of this growth. The relative changes in assessed value are useful for analyzing the experience of Adirondack communities compared to other communities across New York.

With respect to population, we analyzed four indicators from 1970 to 2010: population growth, age group recruitment/loss, median age, and ratio of children to adults of childbearing age. These indicators have been fundamental to the position of those who argue that conservation in the Adirondack Park has led to unusual population loss.

To better understand the population trends, we analyzed the experiences of individual age groups (or age cohorts). What was novel was our calculation of population recruitment or loss of the Park Towns of various age groups compared to other regions. This type of age group analysis has

not been done before in the Adirondacks.

### Map and Table Design

To convey information about each county or town in a region, we employed gradient colored geographic maps (more precisely, bipolar color choropleth maps). Every county or town in the region being analyzed was colored according to the indicator being analyzed in that section of the report. With just two exceptions noted below, the measures were normalized as follows. Where the indicator value was “better” (e.g., lower poverty) than the mean of the Park Towns, the indicator was positive. Where the indicator was worse, it was negative. The positive and negative indicator values were linearly transformed to the intervals 0 to +1 and 0 to -1 so that the “best” county or town in the region was +1 and the “worst” was -1. If the indicator was equal to the weighted mean value of the Park Towns, it was transformed to 0. After this transformation, the numerical measures were transformed to color values. The color values were computed in the RGB color model. A numerical value of 0 was transformed to white (maximum values for red, green, and blue). As numerical values increased linearly from there, red and blue were decreased linearly. A numerical value of +1 was transformed to pure green. Similarly, as numerical values decreased from 0, the blue and green were linearly decreased. A numerical value of -1 was transformed to pure red. Counties or towns outside the region of analysis were colored neutral gray. Counties or towns overlapping the Park were colored a darker gray. The two exceptions to this method were as follows. While the zero point for the numerical transformations was generally the weighted mean Park Towns value, that was not the appropriate zero point for the two New York State analyses that included analyses of areas inside the Park. For the map of New York State school district enrollment trends, the analysis included and shaded districts inside the

Park. Therefore, we chose the zero point to be exactly zero percent enrollment change. For the map of New York State real property assessed value trends, towns inside the Park were again included and shaded. Therefore, we chose the zero point to be the median increase in assessed value among all New York towns.

The several tables of regional population changes among various age groups employed the same coloring used in the maps. The zero point (white) was always zero percent recruitment of population. The comparison was always with the immediately preceding decennial census, except for the final total change column, where the reference point was the first column. The linear transformation to +1 and to -1 was performed so that the colors would match across the several pages of age group tables. An increase of +19% was mapped to +1, a decrease of -41% was mapped to -1, and no change was mapped to 0. The +19% and -41% changes were chosen to accommodate the largest changes observed across the several tables. Thus, there was no clipping or truncation of color in any of the several tables and each particular color represented exactly the same percent change population across every table in the population trends analysis.

### 62 Adirondack Park Towns:

#### Clinton County

Au Sable  
Black Brook  
Dannemora

#### Essex County

Chesterfield  
Crown Point  
Elizabethtown  
Essex  
Jay  
Keene  
Lewis  
Minerva  
Moriah  
Newcomb  
North Elba  
North Hudson



## Methods

St. Armand Schroon Ticonderoga Westport Willsboro Wilmington	<b>Washington County</b> Dresden Putnam	<b>30 Adirondack Park Split Towns:</b>	<b>47 Rural New York State Towns:</b>	<b>Livingston County</b> Nunda
<b>Franklin County</b> Brighton Duane Franklin Harrietstown Santa Clara Tupper Lake Waverly		<b>Clinton County</b> Altona Ellenburg Peru Plattsburgh Saranac	<b>Allegany County</b> Alma Birdsall Ward West Almond	<b>Oneida County</b> Steuben
<b>Fulton County</b> Bleecker Caroga Northampton Stratford		<b>Franklin County</b> Bellmont	<b>Broome County</b> Maine	<b>Oswego County</b> Redfield Williamstown
<b>Hamilton County</b> Arietta Benson Hope Indian Lake Inlet Lake Pleasant Long Lake Morehouse Wells		<b>Fulton County</b> Broadalbin Ephratah Johnstown Mayfield Oppenheim	<b>Cattaraugus County</b> Ashford Coldspring Freedom Little Valley Red House South Valley	<b>Otsego County</b> New Lisbon
<b>Herkimer County</b> Ohio Webb		<b>Herkimer County</b> Russia Salisbury Lewis County Croghan Diana Greig Lyonsdale Watson	<b>Cayuga County</b> Locke	<b>Schoharie County</b> Blenheim
<b>St. Lawrence County</b> Clare Clifton Fine Piercefield		<b>Oneida County</b> Forestport Remsen	<b>Chenango County</b> Afton German	<b>Seneca County</b> Lodi
<b>Saratoga County</b> Day Edinburg		<b>St. Lawrence County</b> Colton Hopkinton Lawrence Parishville Pitcairn	<b>Clinton County</b> Clinton	<b>St. Lawrence County</b> Brasher Fowler Macomb
<b>Warren County</b> Bolton Chester Hadley Hague Horicon Johnsburg Lake George Lake Luzerne Stony Creek Thurman Warrensburg		<b>Saratoga County</b> Corinth Greenfield Providence	<b>Columbia County</b> Claverack	<b>Steuben County</b> Howard West Union
		<b>Warren County</b> Queensbury	<b>Delaware County</b> Andes Bovina Harpersfield Tompkins	<b>Sullivan County</b> Tusten
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			<b>Franklin County</b> Constable Moir	<b>Wyoming County</b> Genesee Falls Middlebury
			<b>Greene County</b> Halcott	
			<b>Jefferson County</b> Worth	
			<b>Lewis County</b> Harrisburg Lewis Montague Osceola Pinckney	



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## Board of Directors

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Protect the Adirondacks is a private membership-supported organization dedicated to stewardship and open space protection in the Adirondack Park for current and future generations. Protect the Adirondacks pursues this mission through grassroots organizing, advocacy, education, research, independent public oversight of state and local agencies, and legal action. Protect the Adirondacks is led by a volunteer Board of Directors and professional staff and maintains a headquarters in Johnsbury, New York, in the central Adirondacks.

Protect the Adirondacks has been a leading voice defending the Forest Preserve and protecting the environment of the Adirondack Park for more than a century. Protect the Adirondacks was formed in 2009 in a merger of the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks, established in 1902, and the Residents' Committee to Protect the Adirondacks, established in 1991. Protect the Adirondacks continues a long tradition of defending the public "forever wild" Forest Preserve, protect-

ing wildlife, waters, the great forests, and rural communities of the six-million-acre Adirondack Park.

2019 marks the 22nd year of the Adirondack Lake Assessment Program (ALAP), which has grown to one of the best long-term citizen science programs in the U.S. Protect the Adirondacks manages ALAP in partnership with the Adirondack Watershed Institute at Paul Smith's College. Trained volunteers who participate in ALAP take a series of water samples monthly through the summer season and a report is published each year. ALAP has documented high levels of road salt pollution in a number of leading lakes across the Adirondacks, among other key water quality challenges.

Protect the Adirondacks manages a wide variety of education, advocacy, and long-term research projects. Protect the Adirondacks partners with the Kelly Adirondack Center of Union College in the preservation and man-

agement of the Adirondack Research Library, a collection of historic materials about Adirondack conservation and cultural history. The Adirondack Research Library is open to the public and is located in Niskayuna, New York.

The public Forest Preserve shapes the Adirondack Park experience by providing stunning outdoor recreational opportunities and underwriting the local tourism economy. It also safeguards a vast array of natural habitats that protect ecological integrity and complexity across a broad, intact landscape. The Forest Preserve was created in 1885, made forever wild in 1894 in the New York Constitution, and has grown to over 2.6 million acres over the last 133 years through a bipartisan, multi-generational commitment of New Yorkers. A core focus of the work of Protect the Adirondacks is research and advocacy to protect the Forest Preserve. Each year, work is undertaken to advocate for state funding for land acquisition and for state stewardship of trails and facilities. Protect the Adirondacks works on the classification of



Forest Preserve lands, with a special focus on expanding designated Wilderness areas. Each year, we monitor state land classification and Unit Management Plans for different Forest Preserve areas, and undertake fieldwork to identify areas of overuse or where management can be improved.

In addition to the defense of the Forest Preserve, Protect the Adirondacks conducts independent public oversight of state agencies that manage public and private lands in the Adirondacks, such as the Adirondack Park Agency and Department of Environmental Conservation, among others, to ensure that environmental laws, regulations, and policies are upheld and decisions are made in open, transparent, and accountable forums. Protect the Adirondacks is committed to strengthen-

ing New York's environmental laws for public and private land regulation and protection in the Adirondacks.

Protect the Adirondacks also works to protect water quality by strengthening environmental laws and programs to meet the threats of road salt pollution, aquatic invasive species infestation, and stormwater pollution from shoreline and watershed development. We work to protect wildlife, to try to meet the immense challenges facing the Adirondacks from climate change, and help with community development projects in the small rural communities of the Adirondacks.

Protect the Adirondacks publishes three newsletters and an annual report each year as well as e-bulletins, action alerts, and special

reports. The Board of Directors consists of volunteers with a great breadth of experience in Adirondack Park history, environmental law, small business, local government, state environmental agency management, financial management, and state government. The Board manages a series of committees, including the Conservation & Advocacy Committee, which is the nerve center of the organization.

Protect the Adirondacks owns and maintains an energy efficient headquarters in Johnsburg that is powered by a solar array and windmill. The headquarters houses staff offices. Membership information can be found online at [www.protecttheadirondacks.org](http://www.protecttheadirondacks.org). □

**Protect the Adirondacks, Inc.**

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# The Adirondack Park and Rural America

## Economic and Population Trends 1970-2010



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